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April 2010

IT USED TO be the case that World Cups gave the summer transfer market a significant boost, with the tournament's most impressive players cashing in on their new-found fame and good fortune. But today's global market means there will only be a handful of unknown players in South Africa – anyone keen on a North Korean?

So we've focused this month on the players who will make headlines in this summer's transfer market irrespective of what happens in South Africa.

The global recession means the overall sum of money spent is likely to be down on previous years. But huge amounts will still be spent by a select band of super-rich clubs. And so the gap between the tiny elite and the rest of football grows yet further.

In the past few weeks in England, Portsmouth and Crystal Palace have gone into administration, while league championships in Russia and Ireland will kick off this month without clubs (FC Moscow and Cork City respectively) that have collapsed under the financial pressure.

It has always been argued that football clubs never die, they merely find ways to rebuild and revive themselves in lower divisions. Their ties with local communities ensure they never go out of business.

However, the sheer size of football's debt mountain – most of it English – is frightening. This summer we could see further world record transfers set while football slips deeper – and unregulated – into the red.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com

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...IN PICTURES

The global game caught on camera

Back in the ranks...deposed England captain John Terry lines up in the middle of his team-mates before the friendly against Egypt, after a turbulent month on and off the pitch

Jump to it...Germany keeper Rene Adler is rushed off his feet in a friendly against Argentina

Time out...Ronaldo takes a breather for Corinthians in the Libertadores Cup

Roman rage...goalkeeper Julio Sergio lets his frustration spill over following Roma's Europa League defeat to Panathinaikos

Cold comfort...Sturm Graz fans watch their side beat Salzburg 2-0 in the Austrian Cup

Old pals act...David Beckham faces his old club Manchester United for the first time

Staying focused...Malaga's Patrick Mtiliga adjusts his face mask during a La Liga match with Deportivo La Coruna

Brian Glanville

...on the surprising success of the League Cup Final... Wenger's feeble stance on Fabianski...confused creature Tessa Jowell...and poor Wayne Bridge

TAKEN IN ISOLATION, there can be no denying that the latest League Cup Final – the competition has changed its name more often than a conman – was a huge success. A colossal crowd and a highly competitive game between Aston Villa and Manchester United, distinguished by Wayne Rooney's exquisitely headed goal and Antonio Valencia's fine wing play.

It was, however, blemished by a fatuous refereeing decision, whereby United's Nemanja Vidic, having brought down his man in the penalty box, gave away a clear penalty but didn't get as much as a yellow card, let alone a red.

It is all very well for English managers and critics to deploy the ineptitude of Swedish referees, but what about when it is our supposedly distinguished own?

The League Cup is still far from the real thing and the presentation of the so-called Hardaker Trophy for best player to the excellent Valencia evoked jarring memories. This season, the draw that pitted the two Manchester clubs against each other in the semi-finals conferred on the competition a spurious authenticity and drama. United as often as not had put out reserve teams in the earlier rounds, while City fielded a full team to beat what amounted to Arsenal reserves in the previous round.

Yet how delighted that unrelenting xenophobe and shameless reactionary Alan Hardaker, bellicose secretary of the Football League, would have been to see how his own competition had at long last overshadowed the FA Cup. Even to the point that the benighted chief executive of the FA, Ian Watmore, whose struggles with the English language I have already emphasised in these pages, has in defeatist mode been burbling about making the FA Cup a midweek rather than a Saturday competition. He declared that midweek attendances had often been better than those on Saturdays, but has he ignored the fact midweek games are almost invariably replays?

> "The wily Hardaker transformed the League Cup with a double coup"

But then it was the FA, not long before his arrival, which shamelessly cheapened the competition, the mother of tournaments, by colluding with the government and the late, abysmal sports minister Tony Banks, to bully United to eschew the FA Cup, as holders, and take part instead in a pointless non-event in Brazil, hoping vainly to stage in consequence the World Cup.

When the League Cup – now celebrating, if that is the right word, 50 years of uneven existence – began, it was intended by Hardaker to be what it has at long last become: a rival to the FA Cup; with the FA and, particularly, its dominant secretary Stanley Rous the object of Hardaker's bitter animosity.

In those early years, the League Cup was indeed a midweek competition; a two-legged, hole-and-corner affair. But, as I have so often said, the wily Hardaker transformed it with a double coup, much as a rich man might marry off an ugly daughter by giving her a huge dowry.

First, he staged the Final at Wembley. Moreover, he somehow managed to persuade UEFA to let the winners enter what is now the Europa League, thus freezing out the clubs which, in other circumstances, would have qualified, by virtue of their place in the Premier League.

Let us not forget that Hardaker strove with might and main to stop English clubs taking part in the European Cup, succeeding when it began in 1955 by bullying Chelsea and its malleable chairman, Joe Mears – also, then, president of the Football League itself – to refuse its invitation. Matt Busby and Manchester United defied him the following year and took part, only for Hardaker, in 1958, months after United's tragic Munich air crash, to exact a petty revenge. When UEFA generously invited United to compete again, although their

Main man...Manchester United's Valencia with his award after the League Cup Final

ravaged team had not lawfully qualified, Hardaker raged at one committee after another until, bulldozing a joint committee of the FA and Football League, he had his mean way.

BOTH before and after the somewhat farcical defeat at Porto in the European Cup, Arsenal's Arsene Wenger made a point of eulogising his second-choice goalkeeper Lukas Fabianski. You could understand why he should have done so before the game, if only to heighten

Comedy of errors...Fabianski handles back pass

Fabianski's morale and perhaps to encourage himself. But afterwards? After the keeper's two shocking blunders had given away a game the Gunners should never have lost?

First, he fumbled a mishit centre into his own goal, then in the second half he foolishly handled a back pass from Sol Campbell, leading to a soft and silly goal by Porto, who took the free-kick when Arsenal were all at sea and Fabianski had his back to the play.

Wenger thundered that there were several good reasons why the goal should never have been given, making a ferocious attack on an admittedly incompetent Swedish referee – that same Martin Hansson who had failed to see Thierry Henry handle, not once but twice, before setting up a France goal against the Republic of Ireland in that World Cup eliminator in Paris.

But in picking a keeper as suspect as Fabianski at all, was Wenger not making himself, in effect, an accessory before the fact?

WEST HAM UNITED'S new owners want to move to the Olympic Stadium. I'm not wildly in favour of the idea but at least it has one great thing going for it: Tessa Jowell is against it.

This confused creature, an intimate of Tony Blair when they were still living in Islington, has somehow clung on to office even under Gordon Brown. Yet everything she touches, the anti-Midas touch if you like, turns to trash.

She it was who so naively backed the relaxation of the licensing laws, convinced in her folly England would adopt the night-time continental habit of quiet and tasteful cafes. She it was who brought us, with others, the colossal incubus of the Olympic Games, quickly shown to be costing infinitely more than she told us. She it was who encouraged the idea of casinos all over Britain.

Doubtless she's delighted her husband has escaped Italian prison, but will she get back together with the errant fellow, the lawyer David Mills, now that the absurdities of Italian law have enabled him to escape a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence for taking a bribe from the Milan owner and Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi?

The Italian statute of limitations enabled him to be reprieved. But when the dirt first hit the fan, Jowell tactfully moved out of their house, though they seem to have been on good terms ever since. And no, of course, she smelled no rat when asked to sign documents for a vast loan taken out on their house, then promptly repaid. A cabinet inquiry cleared her. I should jolly well hope so.

POOR Wayne Bridge. Having refused to inhabit the same England squad as John Terry, even at the World Cup finals, he has been the subject of obloquy, though some have defended him.

I would suggest, perhaps cynically, the whole tormented matter will become irrelevant as and when the proper incumbent at left-back, the hugely talented if squalidly promiscuous

Mates no more...Bridge and Terry

Ashley Cole, regains full fitness. Otherwise, if that's how Bridge feels, that's how he feels; which means he is in no condition to inhabit the same international squad as the waning Terry.

Terry himself, soon after the whole scandal exploded, played an impeccable game for Chelsea against Arsenal, even setting up his team's first goal. But awful blunders at Everton, Wolverhampton, San Siro and against Manchester City suggested perhaps even he has been affected by the furore. ●

GOALS
WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

Easy does it...Higuain

1 Gonzalo Higuain, Real Madrid v Espanyol
A neat first touch to beat his man, before rounding the keeper

2 Theo Janssen, Twente v Werder Bremen
A bullet left-footer from 25 yards

3 Neymar, Santos v Santo Andre
A mazy run and finish, reminiscent of Ricky Villa for Tottenham Hotspur in the 1981 FA Cup Final replay

4 Przemyslaw Kazmierczak, Vitoria Setubal v Uniao Leiria
Flicks the ball over his shoulder and backheels home

5 Felipe Azevedo, Paulista v Portuguesa
Shows quick reactions with a bicycle kick

6 Darren Ambrose, Crystal Palace v Aston Villa
A thunderous 35-yard free-kick

Rocket man...Ambrose

AND ONE TO FORGET...

Mud slide grim...Barrett is just too late

Adam Barrett, Colchester United v Southend United
Spare a thought for the Southend defender who got stuck in the mud and could only watch as Anthony Wordsworth's tame toe poke trickled over the line for Colchester

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

NUMBERS GAME

445
Serie A appearances Alessandro Del Piero has made for Juventus. He set this new club record against Genoa in February

87
goals scored by Sao Paulo's keeper Rogerio Ceni. The Brazilian side have never lost when the 37-year-old has been on the score sheet

500
internationals won by England following their comeback to beat Egypt 2-1 at Wembley

€401.4m
Real Madrid's earnings in 2008-09, according to the latest Deloitte report, making the Spanish club the world's highest earners

€327m
Manchester United's earnings for the same period

£3.5bn
total debt of English Premier League clubs, according to a UEFA report

42
arrests after fighting between Estudiantes and Argentinos Juniors supporters which resulted in the death of a police officer

REPORTS we couldn't make up

PODOLSKI IN TROUBLE

Germany forward Lukas Podolski is in trouble again after hitting a television reporter following his country's friendly defeat by Argentina in Munich.

As Podolski was walking out of the stadium through the media zone he appeared to be angered by comments from DSF reporter Christian Ortlepp. He aimed a punch at Ortlepp and was pulled away by German FA officials.

Podolski, who lashed out at Germany captain Michael Ballack during last year's World Cup qualifier against Wales, later apologised.

Germany coach Joachim Low said: "The incident did not please us."

Mr Angry...Podolski

Tribute...Erico

REMAINS RESTORED

The remains of former Paraguay striker Arsenio Erico were covered with Argentinian and Paraguayan flags when they arrived back at Nacional's Arsenio Erico stadium in Asuncion in February.

Thirty-two years after his death, fans paid tribute and celebrated his repatriation. Erico, who scored a record 293 goals for Independiente between 1934 and 1947, died in 1977 and was buried in Argentina.

RUMOURS we'd like to believe

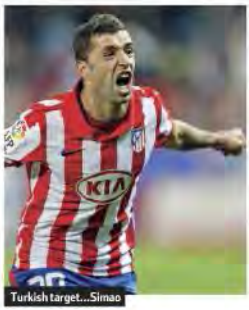
Bayern bound...Hleb

According to reports in southern Germany, Bayern Munich are preparing to make an offer to Barcelona for Belarus midfielder Alex Hleb, who is on loan at Stuttgart this season.

De Telegraaf in Holland believes Valencia and Atletico Madrid are engaged in a tug-of-war for PSV Eindhoven's flying Hungarian wide-man Balasz Dzsudzsak. Both Liga outfits have met PSV's valuation of £10million, so which one will be willing to go that extra mile?

Lyon daily *Le Progres* is suggesting that the local club want to enroll Sunderland's defensive midfielder Lorik Cana. The Albanian has had previous spells in Ligue 1, with Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille.

Sources in Istanbul claim Fenerbahce hope to bring in Atletico Madrid's Portuguese winger Simao. To get their man, Fener are ready to use their Spain striker Dani Guiza as bait.


Turkish target...Simao

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Paul Gardner

Ramsey's broken leg was no accident

AS IF THE sickening sight of Arsenal's young Aaron Ramsey being carried off on a stretcher was not bad enough, we were forced to endure the avalanche of excuses, evasions, falsifications and general hocus-pocus seeking to tell us why this horrendous happening was just one of those things you have to put up with in football. It was only an accident.

Well, not in this column it wasn't.

That does not mean I am accusing Stoke City's Ryan Shawcross of deliberately maiming Ramsey. Not at all. Unfortunately, the English language lets us down badly on these occasions. For a start, we are likely to be told that "Ramsey broke his leg" when in fact it was someone else who managed that for him.

Then that word "accident" is totally wrong. Allow me to invent a new word – "laxident" – to define those actions where intention is absent, but where negligent or reckless behaviour is likely to cause harm or injury.

Shawcross was guilty of an appallingly reckless challenge on Ramsey. This was no "tackle" – as some have referred to it – but a reckless and violent swipe of the leg towards the ball. Of course Shawcross did not intend to break Ramsey's leg. But what he did made it virtually certain that Ramsey would suffer some sort of serious injury. I guess that would be criminal negligence in a court of law.

That is what Shawcross is guilty of – and it is a serious offence.

As it happens, Shawcross has a record of "laxidents", having dispatched Francis Jeffers with a broken ankle in 2007, sidelined Emmanuel Adebayor for three weeks in 2008 and now Ramsey. But, despite that grim record, is it fair to blame Shawcross entirely?

Definitely not. Look at those words I used above to describe the offerings of his supporters: evasion, falsification, hocus-pocus. We're used to that sort of thing these days. It is usually known as "sales talk". What we are being sold is a solid lie about the game of football.

Those people – and they include far too many coaches – who insist football cannot be played without plenty of crunching contact are the guilty salesmen. What they keep telling us is "football is a man's game". It is held to be unarguable that it is a contact sport. But that is a statement that should be challenged at every opportunity.

Its proponents are trampling on the history of their own sport. When the original game, in 1863, finally broke into two codes, the split came not over the matter of handling the ball but the issue of contact. The rugby enthusiasts wanted to continue the practice of hacking or shinning; the soccer people did not. And so the sport of football was born under an all-important rule limiting body contact.

Bad break... Arsenal players look on as Stoke's Glenn Whelan consoles Ramsey

> "What Shawcross did made it **virtually certain** that Ramsey would **suffer** some sort of **serious injury**... that would be **criminal negligence** in a **court of law**"

Ignoring the rules

However, the proponents of football as a tough, tough, man's game choose to ignore not only the sport's history but its current rules as well. By calling football a "body contact" sport, they are putting it in the same category as rugby and American football – sports that cannot be played without it.

How can football be included under that heading? A quick look at Rule 12 tells you it imposes severe limitations on virtually all forms of body contact: kicking, tripping, jumping at, charging, striking, pushing, tackling and holding an opponent. The spirit behind those rules is clearly trying to limit body contact as far as possible.

To return to the Ramsey case, Stoke like to play in a style that is always described with euphemisms such as physical, hard or forceful. Given Rule 12, it is quite clear such a style must always live on the brink. But to Stoke an overtly physical approach is OK against Arsenal because they're a skilful team and that's almost certainly the only way to beat them. Obviously, Shawcross has bought into this mindset.

But there are plenty of others in plenty of other teams and behind them are their coaches, who bear a heavy responsibility for any injuries inflicted. This goes right to the top, to the International Board which makes the rules and has consistently turned down the chance to fashion ones that will uphold the sport's traditions and come down heavily on reckless players.

In a football culture like England's, where full-blooded tackling is revered, it would be difficult for any referee who strictly applied the rules against violent play to stay in employment for very long.

Football has plenty of incidental contact, but to shift the contact to a central position in the playing of the game betrays its spirit. It is also asking for trouble, which will assuredly come, as it did to Ramsey. There is, after all, only the finest line between a player who welcomes contact should it arrive and one who goes looking for it. The stage is set for the inevitable "accidents". ●

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HEROES...

GONZALO HIGUAIN

The Real Madrid striker scored the only goal in Argentina's friendly victory over Germany in Munich.

Winner...Higuain

GERGELY RUDOLF

Having agreed to join Genoa in Italy this summer when his contract expires – and thereby deny his present club, Debrecen, a lucrative transfer fee – the 25-year-old striker gratefully offered to forego his wages for the rest of the Hungarian season.

FIFA

The world governing body will donate its two per cent levy from friendly games played between now and the World Cup finals to victims of the earthquake in Haiti. It appealed to national federations to match the donation.

Gift...Rudolf

& VILLAINS

HARRODS

The department store, owned by Fulham chairman Mohamed Al Fayed, refused entry to Shakhtar Donetsk players ahead of their Europa League game against Fulham...because they were wearing tracksuits.

No entry...Harrods

BRUNO VALE

The Belenenses goalkeeper was sent off against Benfica after running 20 yards out of his area, saving a shot with his hand...and then falling to the ground, pretending the ball had hit him in the face.

NIGEL DE JONG

The Holland midfielder broke USA midfielder Stuart Holden's leg in a tackle the US federation described as "wreckless" during an international friendly in Amsterdam.

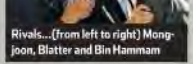
Wreckless...De Jong

BLATTERWATCH

Keeping tabs on the FIFA president

SEPP BLATTER insists he fully intends to stand for re-election at FIFA Congress next year, despite the strong possibility that he will face a challenge from increasingly vocal figures within the Asian confederation.

Mohamed Bin Hammam, who is president of the Asian confederation, has made it clear that he believes two terms is enough for a FIFA leader. Another FIFA vice-president considering a challenge is Chung Mong-joon of South Korea.


Rivals...(from left to right) Mong-joon, Blatter and Bin Hammam

But Blatter, 74 on March 10, said: "There will be candidates for the FIFA presidency in 2011 from Asia, if I believe what has been reproduced by the media. I have not changed my position. I will still be there. I haven't finished my mission and, if congress so decides, I will be at its disposal."

Seconds out.

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David Conn

UEFA report exposes English debts

Premier League clubs' £3.5billion shocker strengthens Platini's 'fair play' case

THE TIMING could hardly have been more acute for the release by UEFA of a report into the financial excesses of Europe's top clubs, just as Portsmouth were placed, insolvent, into the knacker's yard of administration.

UEFA's report, "The European Club Footballing Landscape," a mammoth comparison of 654 clubs in the top divisions across Europe, showed that more money is coming in than ever before, but almost half of clubs overall, 47 per cent, still made losses in 2008. European football, the richest club sport in the world, lost £578million (£513m) in total.

UEFA president Michel Platini and general secretary Gianni Infantino pointed to the report as further evidence of the need for their "financial fair play" initiative, the full force of which is only slowly dawning on the overspending clubs, particularly in England. From 2012-13 clubs will have to break even – and earnings do not include money poured in from owners, even though the Premier League is still arguing it should.

Platini, who has made it his presidential mission to wrestle with football's financial excesses, said in the foreword: "While clubs' revenues have continued to rise, these have been entirely absorbed by the growth in [players' wage] costs...pushing many clubs to rely on debt or shareholders' contributions. For the health of European club football, those many clubs that operate with financial discipline and sustainable business plans must be encouraged."

The report shows English football's income towering over the rest, each Premier League club making on average £108m, compared to £70m in the next richest league, the Bundesliga.

Yet even on those booming figures, the Premier League recorded a loss overall – and the most startling figure was that for debts. The 18 Premier League clubs included in the report were carrying close to £3.5billion of debt from banks, more than all of

Pay up Pompey...Portsmouth's Fratton Park home

Europe's other top-flight clubs put together: 56 per cent of the total.

Infantino stressed not all debt is damaging, citing Arsenal, who borrowed £260m at a favourable 5 per cent annual interest rate to finance the mountainous move from Highbury to Emirates Stadium.

"Arsenal is a good example of a club borrowing to finance long-term development," he said. "But doing it to fuel spending on players is not sustainable. It is worrying to see such huge debt, and Portsmouth's example shows that something must be done."

The Premier League, with Pompey crumbling further every day, has been notably restrained about this rule-making by a confident UEFA, now demonstrating genuine leadership for European football. Gone – for now – is the grumble that UEFA's concerns are a plot by a Frenchman (Platini) to level English football down.

The Premier League accepts it does make sense for clubs, in the game's richest boom time, not to be skirting financial collapse. However, the sticking point is over whether owners should still be allowed to put millions in, citing men such as Jack Walker at Blackburn Rovers, Roman Abramovich at Chelsea and the latest extravagant backer, Sheikh Mansour of Abu Dhabi, who has already pumped £400m into his Manchester City venture to, principally, fund high wages.

Portsmouth did not figure in that list of benefactors, but the club is not the aberration the league would like to believe. Pompey too had an owner, Alexandre "Sacha" Gaydamak, putting in loans to fund the spending which took Harry Redknapp's muscular team to the FA Cup as recently as 2008.

Since the Premier League was formed in 1992 as a breakaway by the Football League's First Division, clubs in the other three divisions have fallen insolvent a staggering 53 times. The inequality between the top league and the rest – a chasm of £40m per average club in TV money alone – has been a factor in those collapses. Yet now, the first club in the world's richest league has gone the way of Stockport County, Crystal Palace and so many others, and that asks searching questions of the freewheeling way England's clubs have been bought, sold, pumped up and allowed to borrow.

Clubs are not in the pink of health everywhere in Europe. In France, though, they are not permitted to run up huge debts and debts generally are a fraction of those in the Premier League. In part this is because most clubs still do not own their grounds – 65 per cent of Europe's top-division clubs rent from a local authority. It is also striking how many, 42 per cent, are still truly clubs (members associations), and not companies at all.

Amid all the money frothing around, particularly in England, the most commercialised football country of all, there is still a people's game at its heart, crying out for protection. ●

"Borrowing to fuel spending on players is not sustainable...the Portsmouth example shows that something must be done"

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Rooney inspires United

Manchester United beat Aston Villa to win the League Cup, thanks to a winning goal from Wayne Rooney. More, pages 8 and 20

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Back to the future

Part-time football is on the cards following the demise of Cork City. More, page 42

SPAIN
Favourites on fire

The national team beat France 2-0 in the latest round of friendly internationals. More, page 32

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Dunga's dilemma

Debate is still raging over whether Ronaldinho should go to the World Cup, despite the comprehensive win over the Republic of Ireland. More, page 28

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Troubled start
The new league campaign kicks off without FC Moscow, who collapsed following the withdrawal of a sponsor. More, page 92

HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

Wayne Rooney
United striker in line for the Golden Shoe

ENGLAND

EVERTON fans never doubted Wayne Rooney's potential; nor did Manchester United fans, though they may have wondered about the timeline. Sven Goran Eriksson, meanwhile, was never in any doubt.

The Swede, during his spell as England manager, may have been blandly diplomatic about his players on occasion, but about Rooney he never wavered: "The most remarkably talented young player I have ever worked with."

Considering Eriksson has coached at the highest levels in Italy and Portugal, and spent vast amounts of time visiting and observing in other top nations, that was praise indeed.

Now 24, Rooney appears on the brink of fulfilling all that potential, just over seven years since first shooting to fame with a spectacular last-minute winner for Everton against Arsenal. His England debut, in February 2003, saw him become the country's youngest international at the time, and he remains England's youngest goalscorer courtesy of a strike against Macedonia in September 2003.

A broken metatarsal in the quarter-finals against Portugal wrecked Euro 2004 for Rooney (and England) after he had run up four goals against Switzerland and Croatia in the group stage. Two years later, the same jinx opposition saw England halted at the quarter-finals stage of the 2006 World Cup after Rooney was sent off for stamping on Ricardo Carvalho.

But this season has seen a step up in quality and effect, even by his own high standards.

Nine goals in nine World Cup qualifiers prove his international class, while his domestic form has been magisterial, leading the United attack with power and pace. His goal in the League Cup Final against Aston Villa was his 28th of the season in all competitions – a total which included the 23 in the Premier League, putting him top of the ESM Golden Shoe standings. Rooney has been unstoppable and, in the short term, Premier League rivals Chelsea should beware. In the longer term, so should every other nation heading for South Africa.

Keir Radnedge

Unstoppable...Rooney heads United's winner in the 2-1 League Cup Final victory over Villa

Accusations...Amerell (left) and Kempter

Manfred Amerell & Michael Kempter
Whistle-blower accuses referees' spokesman

GERMANY

THE BAD HEADLINES just keep on coming for the German FA (DFB): the internecine warfare pitting Bundestrainer Joachim Low and his team manager Oliver Bierhoff against national technical director Matthias Sammer (see page 35); the shambolic and ultimately futile attempts to tie Low to a new contract; and now the highly damaging accusation that federation referees' spokesman Manfred Amerell sexually harassed top match official Michael Kempter.

The 27-year-old Kempter, in charge of Bundesliga games since 2006 and on the FIFA list, first complained to the DFB of Amerell's behaviour last December. However details of the supposedly confidential *cri de coeur* recently seeped into the public domain, and within hours both tabloid and highbrow press were fanning the flames of a heaven-sent scoop.

An officiating prodigy – he was running the line in the second division at the age of 18 and in charge of top-flight games five years later – Kempter revealed in an interview with *Bild* newspaper that Amerell had made advances towards him on three separate occasions, even going as far as to kiss him.

"It was a gradual process," recalled Kempter. "Amerell built up my trust over some years before letting loose. It intensified over the last year. I had to be free of this burden. It's a relief to have taken this step."

Amerell, who immediately resigned from his DFB job on health grounds, strenuously denied any wrongdoing, as well as the charge he had abused his position of power. Yet he did admit to an "intensive private friendship" with Kempter and, in a bizarre move bordering on the defamatory, released a text message from the young ref which read: "Why are we destroying everything? We have both made mistakes. Can't go on without you."

While Amerell had every right to defend himself, the method he used to portray Kempter as a more than willing participant in the relationship was as clumsy as it was unnecessary and it deservedly brought him stinging criticism from the DFB.

"The claims against me are without foundation," declared Amerell, 62, himself a former Bundesliga whistler and on the referees supervisory board for the past 16 years. "We had a close bond, but there was absolutely no attacks or harassment involved."

Unfortunately for the accused, witnesses for the prosecution are piling up. Apparently the DFB has received complaints from four other referees and Udo Konstantopoulos, an official in the Bavarian league, told *Bild am Sonntag*: "He [Amerell] had his favourites whom he privileged and nurtured."

Truth to tell, many in the German game are enjoying the sight of Amerell squirming. During his time in public life he has cultivated the image of fearless straight talker, a dispenser of fiery home truths and the irony of his current predicament is not lost on those he has verbally attacked in the past. Enemies don't forget.

As for Kempter, he insists he will carry on and the DFB seems keen for him to do so. He has a tough journey ahead of him though; the bigots will make sure of that.

Nick Bidwell

Karl-Heinz Rummenigge
Chairman of the influential European Club Association

GERMANY

GERMAN FOOTBALL is remarkable in terms of its player education and development beyond the realms of "merely" kicking a ball about.

Franz Beckenbauer glided from player to club captain, to national captain, to national coach, to federation vice-president, to World Cup bid leader, to World Cup organising president, and then on to executive delegate with both UEFA and FIFA.

Meanwhile, the Hoeness brothers both evolved from successful players into general managers, and the likes of Jurgen Klinsmann and Matthias Sammer have also crossed the technical/administrative touchline with enormous success.

Another impressive example of the German method is Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, who has re-emerged at 54 onto the international stage in his role as chairman of the increasingly influential European Club Association (ECA) – a role he is perfectly qualified for by virtue of his successful work as chief executive of Bayern Munich.

As a young, pacy right-winger, Rummenigge cost Bayern a mere £4,500 when he signed from his home-town, lower-league club Borussia Lippstadt in 1974. A decade later he was sold to Internazionale for £2million, which was a huge fee for the time.

By this point in his career he had won the World Club Cup and the Champions Cup twice, and been hailed as European Footballer of the Year as well as captaining West Germany to the runners-up spot at the 1982 World Cup.

The story was told of Rummenigge, to illustrate his focus and determination, that when he was involved in transfer talks in the spring with Inter, he told the Italians' sports director Sandro Mazzola: "When I come for pre-season training then I will be speaking Italian."

Top of the table...chairman Rummenigge

In due course he returned to Bayern and began working off the field with old on-field team-mates such as Beckenbauer, Hoeness and Paul Breitner, and he has now graduated to international status by picking up and building the clubs' forum which had been launched initially by UEFA as a counter to the G-14 and was then discarded by Michel Platini.

After becoming UEFA president, Platini had decided that a club association had no place within the federation and that it should sink or swim by its own volition. Possibly he hoped it would sink.

However, Rummenigge and a core of dedicated directors – including Peter Kenyon, during his Chelsea days, and Manchester United's David Gill – have ensured quite the reverse, which led to Rummenigge emerging from a recent ECA congress in Manchester to lay down the clubs' own law in response to UEFA's financial fair play proposals.

Platini may yet come to regret his profligacy.

Keir Radnedge

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Keir Radnedge

Europe or bust

The European recession is having a major knock-on effect in South America

TURN AROUND the cliche about the world catching a cold every time America sneezes; in terms of football finance, the world suffers when Europe sneezes.

Or, if you want to consider the sad but not unique case of Premier League side Portsmouth, when Europe catches pneumonia.

Of course, January in the northern hemisphere is usually the time when coughs, sneezes and bugs of all sorts rush around the old world, and that made events – or, rather, non-events – during the transfer window unhealthily appropriate.

Clubs in Argentina and Brazil rely heavily on a steady income stream from European clubs for their young talent. January being that continent's traditional inter-season break, it's a perfect moment for clubs from Boca to Botafogo to count the transfer income, pay off some debts and flip some of the cash into buying up the next would-be Ronaldinho or Riquelme.

To this extent, a majority of South American clubs live a much more hand-to-mouth existence than their European equivalents. Player strikes over unpaid wages are commonplace, long-term TV deals virtually unknown and the match schedules long ago reached saturation point.

Argentina's only significant January sale to Europe was Salvio's £7m move to Atletico Madrid

Presidents and coaches, particularly in Spain and Italy, have consistently used the January transfer window to freshen up their squads with some exotic new Latin American import to keep the crowds ticking along and demonstrate their financial commitment.

But all that changed this year. Argentinian clubs registered just one significant sale to Europe – that of Eduardo Salvio, from Lanus to Spain's Atletico Madrid for £7million. Last summer the total international transfer income was £12m, which was little more than a quarter of the income recorded in both 2007 and 2008.

Some European observers were misled about the financial health of the South American game after seeing world-class players such as Adriano and Ronaldo return to Brazil to rebuild their careers after controversies over off-field activities and injuries had run them out of the European game.

But these deals – which include the loan agreement that took Robinho back to Santos from Manchester City – owe almost everything financially to sponsorship and little or nothing to the clubs' own wage structures or financial capabilities.

No new phenomenon

Of course, South American dependence on European transfer cash is no new phenomenon. In the late 1950s Argentinian giants River Plate were able to complete the original construction of their iconic El Monumental in Buenos Aires only after selling Enrique Omar Sivori to Juventus for £95,000.

Those were also the days when the European market was nothing like as vast as it has been ever since the 1995 Bosman ruling blew the roof off the transfer market by forcing an end to discriminatory, nationality-based restrictive regulation.

Since then, South American football has lost not only a wealth of talent – including many teenagers whose potential careers were wrecked by moving to Europe far too early – but also self-respect.

In 1958 and 1962 Brazil won the World Cup with a marvellous team drawn only from Brazilian clubs. In 1978 champions Argentina fielded just one emigrant in Mario Kempes. Now national coaches Dunga and Diego Maradona look to Europe for the vast majority of their squads.

It's an ill wind which blows no one any good. Maybe the recession isn't such bad news after all if it keeps the finest young South Americans at home for an extra year or three. ●

New start...Lanus striker Salvio is unveiled at Vicente Calderon on joining Atletico Madrid

Put your shirt on us...Jordaan and Maradona meet at Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg

Defiant Jordaan ready to prove the critics wrong

DANNY JORDAAN expects to be magnificently justified in fighting off the critics when South Africa delivers "a wonderful World Cup with the support of all the 32 teams".

The South African organising committee's chief executive has gone on the attack after a weary five years defending FIFA's selection of his country against complaints about security, transport and accommodation (or all three together). He feels he can see the winning post.

Responding to critical questioning about the training camps, Jordaan says: "You will see. We will have some of the best, not only in Africa but in the world."

As for the match venues, he adds: "All the stadia are complete, notwithstanding scepticism that they would not be and that we would run out of money. When Diego Maradona walked on to the pitch at Soccer City recently he said: 'If only I were 10 years younger! This is one of the best football arenas in the world.'

"Maradona's words, not mine. What I say is that we are on track to deliver a wonderful World Cup with the support of all the 32 teams."

In fact, the jewel in the crown of the World Cup stadia has yet to be given the official seal of approval. Soccer City in Johannesburg, scheduled to host the opening match, the Final and various ties in between, is not ready – or "on track", to use event organisers' favourite buzz phrase.

I have been inside Soccer City and the problem is not the interior but the exterior approaches and access. Remembering stadium building sites during the finals of 1982 (Spain) and 1990 (Italy) this is no serious cause for concern, but it has irritated FIFA and embarrassed the South Africans (though neither dare say so).

One positive product of the travel challenge of 2010 is that, looking ahead to 2014 in Brazil, FIFA is returning to the "neighbouring venues" system which operated at World Cups between the 1950s and 1980s.

This is because of concerns, already identified, over travel and climatic variations up, down and across the length and breadth of a country which will be playing host for a second time.

FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke says: "We need to avoid teams having to travel from, say, Porto Alegre up to Recife in the first phase because of a 20-degree difference in temperature. So we have divided the country into four pieces to make sure we can move teams and fans sensibly."

● SOUTH AFRICAN fans will benefit from a silver lining in the cloud generated by the global recession over 2010 World Cup ticket sales.

Only half of the hospitality packages have been sold, meaning there are more available at the other end of the scale – the lowest-price range created exclusively for ordinary South Africans.

While it is unlikely the organisers will hit their original target of 450,000 international visitors, FIFA will not cut ticket prices. No need; the finals will, as ever, be a potential sell-out many times over.

Hedging bets...Russia bids for 2018 and 2022

2018 still open to all

A DECISION on whether Europe's bidders will have an exclusive, clear run for World Cup 2018 and leave 2022 open for the rest will not be taken until 24 hours before decision day on December 2.

Ten bids are on the table. The 2018 race is between England, Holland/Belgium, Russia and Spain/Portugal from Europe, Australia and Japan from the Asian confederation, plus the United States from CONCACAF. Competing only for 2022 are Indonesia, Qatar and South Korea.

Speculation has raged over whether UEFA could corral 2018 for itself. However, my understanding is that the FIFA executive will not be asked to make a decision either way. The bidding associations will have to sort that out among themselves.

To be honest, this is a likely outcome, bearing in mind the vote-bargaining opportunities that it offers.

Meanwhile, watch out for Russia. The Spain/Portugal bid appears to be in danger of imploding because of domestic economic worries and no one in the know would ever expect Spain's FIFA vice-president Angel Villar to vote for England...

Reformer...Jansen wants to bridge the credibility gap when it comes to the public perception of agents

Agents

ROB JANSEN has been around. The Dutchman learned the agent's trade, for which he has a formidable reputation, on football's "shop floor", rather than some ivory tower where the theory of working practices in the maelstrom which is the transfer market are debated at an academic distance.

And that is a good enough reason to pay attention to his opinions on how the system does and does not work, why licensing has been a failure and why FIFA's web-based system for wrapping up international transfers is not the answer.

Agents, of course, have the sort of public reputation which drags them along at a level inhabited by estate agents, journalists and members of parliament; a sort of necessary evil in a free society.

Iansen – the son of a professional footballer, Karel Iansen, who was a FIFpro founder, says he wants to try to change all that – at least as far as agents are concerned – via the fledgling European Football Agents' Association (EFAA).

Agents in the 1950s and 1960s were restricted to enabling the occasional commercial deal which came the way of only the footballing elite. But the advent in England of the £100-a-week player, followed by the expansion of the international market and the megabucks arrival of the twin-headed television-and-sponsorship model, prompted

FIFA goes hi-tech on transfers

INTERNET technology is galloping to international football's rescue in the never-ending transfer market duel of wits between associations and agents. Or so FIFA believes.

FIFA Transfer Matching System GmbH (TMS) is the name of the subsidiary company whose web-based system will, from October 1, be the mandatory gateway through which international transfers must be finalised.

The methodology is based on the long-established need for each transfer of a player between clubs of different countries to be

# of change

Rob Jansen has big plans for a new Europe-wide body representing agents. He talks to Keir Radnedge

permanent revolution. Players and their families on one side, and the clubs on the other, needed the help of someone who could slither between the various competing interests and oil the wheels of a deal.

In time, the top agents became well known in their own right and it suited their own image value for their heads to appear above the publicity parapet.

This meant – in an English context – the appearance of wheelers and dealers such as Dennis Roach, Eric Hall and Barry Silkman, along with international operator Pini Zahavi and a separate clutch of Latin Americans who commanded the busiest market of all, linking Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay with Spain, Portugal and Italy.

Men such as Jon Holmes (representing Gary Lineker) and Tony Stephens (David Platt, Alan Shearer, Michael Owen) extended their work beyond transfer deals and into commercial realms. Meanwhile, FIFA tried to corral the agents explosion by launching a licensing system – with Roach working from the other direction to create the International Association of Football Agents (IAFA).

Now Jansen is trying to find another route which, he believes, can work more effectively than either or both.

Two years ago he and like-minded colleagues launched the EFAA. He says: "Unlicensed people have given honest agents a bad reputation, but the licensing system has not been effective either because we also have lawyers and other people involved in deals who have no proper qualification. In that case, why should agents be restricted?"

Jansen does want "professional, properly experienced" agents to own the right to formal recognition. To this extent, he thinks the EFAA pyramid system – an association of national players' agents – to be a more effective spokesman than the original IAFA.

His current concern is that, while he has been able to talk to the European Union and the European Professional Football Leagues, the doors of both FIFA and UEFA remain shut. This, Jansen believes, is not only obstructive but even short-sighted.

"Of course we want to talk to them," he says. "These are the governing bodies of the game. I hope they will see we are sensible people who have the best interests of the game at heart.

> **I hope the governing bodies will see that we are sensible people who have the best interests of the game at heart**

"They may be surprised because we want more regulations than they ever proposed. This is a commercial business. It should be properly controlled. I can't understand why this is a problem for them.

"They say that only 30 per cent of transfers are managed by agents. That the rest are done between lawyers and accountants and family members. Do they really think there are no agents standing behind them?

"Still, you can only keep knocking at the door for so long. If they don't want to talk, we can't force them and we will go on following our own road which, we think, the clubs will appreciate."

Jansen believes the need for a transparent and efficient transfer system is becoming ever more blindingly obvious as the game strives to cope with the effects of global recession and the financial time bomb as badly-negotiated transfer deals and contracts unravel.

So far EFAA represents agents in less than 20 countries – including associate members from South America – but they are, as Jansen points out, the countries whose clubs and financial strength dominate and dictate the world transfer market. He wants an agents' system which – among other ideas – includes an "education" process and a transparent harmonisation of remuneration, taking into account differing tax regimes and models.

Jansen considers 2011 as doomsday, when he sees the present FIFA licensing system falling away. He does not believe the new, web-based transfers matching system to be adequate as "it records only what it is told, not what is happening; that is where we have something important to say – and do". ●

Third-party deal...Tevez

ratified by an international transfer certificate (ITC). This must be passed between the federations of the two clubs before the player can pull on his new shirt and kick a ball in earnest. The ITC depends on the clubs and associations ticking off the necessary technological "paperwork".

Marco Villiger, FIFA's legal director, said: "TMS changes the international transfer market completely through compliance and control which will be 100 per cent accurate. Money laundering [through transfers] can be prevented and the system ensures that money is paid from club to club.

"On a web-based system cheating is almost impossible," added Villiger.

The way it works is comparatively simple. The two clubs involved in completing a transfer – this is not a system for negotiation – complete forms which detail the identities of the player, the clubs, the federations and the agents – a licensed agent, a qualified lawyer or a family member, and no one can act for player and club – as well as the agreed fee and the payment dates.

If the two forms match then the ITC is granted. At its speediest, the process takes seven minutes. What it does prevent is the age-old trick of one club holding the deal to ransom by demanding to see the fee (plus hidden extras) before releasing permission for the ITC. A bank receipt for the fee must also be returned to FIFA when payment is made.

There will be no more imaginary players to beat money-movement regulations. Also, transferring a player's registration can only be conducted between clubs, not through third-party owners (as with the likes of Carlos Tevez and co).

TMS manager Mark Goddard says: "It places an obligation on clubs to tell the truth – and we will be undertaking spot checks."

● *For a fuller version of this article, go to worldsoccer.com/features*

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Dunga's dilemma

The coach of the World Cup favourites still has selection issues to resolve

BRAZIL

TIM VICKERY in Rio de Janeiro

WITH JUST OVER 100 days to go until Brazil's 2010 World Cup gets under way against North Korea, coach Dunga stomped away from Emirates Stadium in London aware that, for at least half of it, that time will be dominated by appeals for the recall of Ronaldinho.

Brazil fans in the ground that night kept up a chant for the Milan man, but the intensity of the campaign will have been dampened slightly by the competence of the 2-0 win over the Republic of Ireland.

It was an even game until Brazil took the lead just before half-time, through an own goal from Keith Andrews that also had a strong hint of offside in the build-up, but they were in control after the interval and were rewarded when Robinho scored after combining well with Kaka and Grafite.

Had it remained a stalemate, the decibel count for Ronaldinho would

Ariel ballet...Lucio (left) and Maicon try to stop Republic of Ireland striker Kevin Doyle in London

have soared and Dunga's patience strained still further.

Brazil's coach has found out – and there is surely a dose of naivety if he is genuinely surprised – that not everyone in the country shares his priorities. He was hoping for a pliant press, cheering his men on their way to the World Cup, but the media follow their own interests...which means the stoking of controversy.

The Brazilian press do not go in for private-life exposes of the type that have hit England's build-up, but they do like to roll the bandwagon in favour of a rejected star – the stand-off, eight years ago, between striker Romario and coach Luiz Felipe Scolari is a classic of the genre. Now Ronaldinho is the favoured son, leaving Dunga fuming that he first has to beat opponents in Brazil before taking on the rest of the world.

Dreaded question

Only time will tell if Ronaldinho is definitively out of the World Cup. He has reacted far better to being left out than he did to being carried around in the squad for nearly three years, and Dunga may want to keep the pressure on until the last moment. The win over Ireland confirms that a place in the starting line-up is now highly unlikely, though he would surely be a useful option from the bench. Ronaldinho might also help supply an answer to the dreaded question that hangs over Brazil's World Cup bid: what happens if Kaka gets injured?

The signs are, though, that Ronaldinho is out. Dunga recently gave an interview to Brazil's powerful *TV Globo* where he argued that there was no need for new players in his squad, repeatedly stating: "Why do we need new players if 'X' came in and did well?" That 'X' was Julio Baptista, a loyal squad stalwart who is the most at risk from a Ronaldinho recall.

"Everyone had their chance," said Dunga after the Ireland game.

"Everybody could show what they can do. Alexandre Pato [another controversial cast off] had his opportunities, Ronaldinho had the Olympics. Everyone had a chance with the national team."

And many have taken it so well that Dunga's team have accomplished everything that could possibly have been asked of them, winning the 2007 Copa America, last year's Confederations Cup, finishing top of the South American World Cup qualification group and suffering just one defeat in 23 games since the start of the 2008-09 season – and even that was against Bolivia in the extreme altitude of La Paz.

Along the way several of his players have come under heavy fire – a while ago it was Gilberto Silva, more recently it has been Felipe Melo and Robinho. The more they are criticised, the more Dunga stands by them. They are vital members of the group he has constructed in the course of his three-and-a-half years in charge.

And now it seems as if the final, and most tricky, part of the jigsaw has been found.

Left-back has been the major problem position during Dunga's reign. Six players featured there in qualification, none of them entirely convincing. More have been tried out since, with the latest of them, Michel Bastos, being given the full 90 minutes in each of the last three friendlies, against England and Oman last year, and now versus the Irish.

Headmasters...it's Juan (top) and Felipe Melo's turn to thwart Doyle

As a solution this is still not entirely satisfactory as Bastos is an attacking midfielder for Lyon. It is years since he operated as a conventional left-back and his positional sense can be wayward.

Tactically, Brazil's midfield trio are pulled to the right, freeing right-back Maicon to bomb forward. This can leave the left-back unprotected and Ireland managed a few dangerous breaks into this sector – suggesting that the left flank still promises to be Brazil's biggest defensive headache in South Africa.

But for all Ireland's early threat, and the bulk of possession they enjoyed before the interval, there was little for goalkeeper Julio Cesar to do as Juan and, especially, Lucio appeared to clear up the danger before the Irish strikers could get off a shot. The soundness of the central defensive combination – and of the keeper behind them, if required – is a huge asset as it allows the team to sit deep in safety, lure the opposition forward, then spring out with their devastating counter-attacks.

This was how they broke the deadlock against the Irish and it will terrify all their World Cup opponents.

"Pato had his opportunities, Ronaldinho had the Olympics... everyone had a chance in the national team"

Dunga spells it out over selection

Headline grabber...Kaka tries to get a grip on Robinho as the latter celebrates his goal against Ireland

The other deadlock-breaker is the set-piece, which could well end up provoking controversy in the World Cup. There will be plenty of attempts to draw opponents into fouls within range of goal and Kaka won a few fouls against the Irish in this way. It will not always be easy for referees in South Africa to decide whether or not there has been a dive or whether the contact was provoked by the attacker.

Then there are the corners and free-kicks crossed in for Brazil's phalanx of giants to attack. The current Brazil side are huge, with enough good headers of the ball to threaten at the near post, the far and in-between – and they can usually count on the ball being delivered with admirable precision.

Out in the cold...Pato and Ronaldinho will have a nervous wait before Dunga names his World Cup squad

Blocking the zone

Ireland's Italian coach, the veteran Giovanni Trapattoni, had clearly been doing his homework. One of the most interesting aspects of the friendly in London was the position taken up by the Irish defence for Brazil's corners. Two green shirts were placed in front of the near post, around the point at which an outswinging cross starts to bend away from the goalkeeper. This is a space which Brazil's giants love to attack. Blocking the zone considerably reduced their effectiveness from corners and it will be fascinating to see if North Korea, Ivory Coast and Portugal have been taking notes. Brazil, though, have the resources to come up with alternatives.

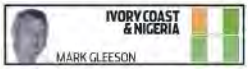
Strong from set-pieces, magnificent on the counter-attack and always capable of moments of dazzling individual brilliance, Dunga's team can look laboured for passages of play.

However, the message from the Ireland game is that they will still be the team to beat in South Africa. ●

Didn't see that coming...Halilhodzic had been secure in his position as Ivory Coast coach until the African Nations Cup

Last-minute madness

Two African countries have jeopardised their World Cup preparations by changing coaches



SHAIBU AMODU may have worn the look of a man on death row, but Vahid Halilhodzic will have had no inkling of his imminent guillotining.

The aftermath of the African Nations Cup has seen two World Cup-bound teams dispense with their coaches just months before they head to South Africa.

For Nigeria, it is a repetition of eight years ago, but for the Ivory Coast it was a surprise move that smacks of player power.

Amodu had seen it all before with Nigeria and carried a haunted look as his side struggled unconvincingly in the January tournament, knowing full well what awaited him at the end of the Angolan adventure. Even though his side made it to the semi-finals, and picked up yet another bronze medal, Amodu was fired within a week of his return – replicating the fate that befell him before the 2002 World Cup.

In 2001 Amodu was given the job of securing Nigeria's place at the Japan/South Korea finals after Jo Bonfrere had been axed halfway through the qualifiers. This he duly achieved, but when the Super Eagles could only manage third place at the 2002 African Nations Cup in Mali, Amodu was pushed aside and replaced by Festus Onigbinde just months before the World Cup in Asia.

Henri Michel of Tunisia and Carlos Queiroz of South Africa were also fired at the same tournament, creating a new legend of the "curse of the Nations Cup" for World Cup-bound coaches.

Halilhodzic would have dismissed that prospect out of hand at the start of the year. Having taken the Ivorians through their World Cup qualifying campaign unbeaten, his side were hot favourites for the crown of continental champions in Angola, as they had been for the two previous editions. And they offered firm proof of their status with an easy win over Ghana in the last group game.

> "Amodu had seen it all before with Nigeria...in 2002 he was replaced just months before the World Cup finals in Asia"

But for a moment's panic in defence in their quarter-final against Algeria, they might have realised their potential. However, they squandered a 2-1 lead late in the game and were beaten 3-2 after extra-time.

Halilhodzic – a former Yugoslav international with a French passport who was born in Bosnia – minced few words in blaming his players for the breakdown and then had to sit through mounting criticism from all corners as he awaited his increasingly obvious fate. He was not told of his firing until more than a month after the Nations Cup exit, the inevitable arriving by fax at his French home. Later the same day, Ivorian Football Federation president Jacques Anouma made public the expected outcome during a televised debate about the national team's recent performance, presumably playing his trump card to deflect any criticism.

Looking to Europe

The Ivorians immediately looked to Europe for a new coach, with Didier Drogba reportedly speaking to Guus Hiddink, and others such as Eric Gerets were also tapped up for the job. But delays in making an appointment mean Ivory Coast will not have a new coach in place until some 80 days before the World Cup gets under way.

Nigeria, meanwhile, published a wish-list of coaches – not for the first time, bizarrely, including Peter Taylor – before setting out to speak to them. The likes of Hiddink, Louis Van Gaal and Giovanni Trapattoni would have been bemused, but quickly made it clear they had no interest.

Eventually, Bruno Metsu, Glenn Hoddle and Lars Lagerback were persuaded to travel to Abuja for interviews, with Lagerback emerging as the surprise choice. His Swedish compatriot Sven Goran Eriksson was also in the mix, though just how seriously remains unclear.

Lagerback watched his new charges beat Congo DR 5-2 in their first match following the African Nations Cup finals, but he will have gained little insight from the friendly in Abuja as a home-based side was supplemented by just two foreign-based players and coached by...Amodu.

The Swede will now have to wait until mid-May to begin his work in earnest, effectively having less than a month before Nigeria's opening match against Argentina in Johannesburg. ●

Ole! Ole! Ole!

The national side are in sparkling form ahead of the World Cup

SPAIN'S LAST GAME before they name their final squad in June could be summed up in a single word. The same word that could also be used to sum up their qualifying campaign for the 2010 World Cup. The same word could be used again for their Euro 2008 campaign.

It is the same word, in fact, that could be used to sum up everything the *seleccion* have done over the last three years under both Luis Aragones and Vicente Del Bosque in a near-impeccable run that has seen them installed as one of the favourites in South Africa. That same word came tumbling down from the stands at the beginning of March as Spain moved the ball effortlessly around midfield against France, and the same word that graced the covers of the country's two best-selling sports newspapers the following day.

That word is *"Ole"*.

For Spain fans to launch into chants of *ole* is nothing new. But what made this time different was that it was the fans of France. This was not the Santiago Bernabeu but the Stade de France in Paris.

"The Stade de France greeted Spain as if it was La Maestranza [Spain's most evocative and emblematic bullring]," noted one headline.

Compliments don't come greater

As France chased after the ball, only for it to be effortlessly moved on, teasing, fooling, manipulating and moving them, it was France's fans purring. Compliments don't come much greater. France had been led a dance in Paris.

There was, of course, an element of protest as well as praise in the *oles*. By lauding Spain, those fans were lifting a middle finger at their own national team. There were also boos and whistles for Thierry Henry and chants for Raymond Domenech to resign. Cheering Spain may have served to rub it in, but it also expresses admiration for a side that won 2-0 with goals from David Villa – with his 36th strike in just 55 games for the national team leaving him only eight behind Raul's all-time record, despite having played 47 games fewer – and Sergio Ramos.

Afterwards, Spain coach Del Bosque insisted he had not been that impressed with the performance, claiming his side lacked aggression and attacking intent. But, he admitted, they had felt in control. And that was the point. Spain had not won in France for 42 years and it had been *Les Blues* who had knocked them out of the last World Cup. But you would never have guessed it. Spain had completely dominated, easing their way through 90 minutes in comfort.

There is a quiet, efficient authority about them that is quite stunning.

"Spain play with such ease, it's incredible," commented the watching Arsene Wenger.

"We are playing with great confidence and tremendous ease," said goalkeeper Iker Casillas as he came off the pitch having racked up his 102nd Spain game, more than anyone else in history other than Andoni Zubizarreta. It might have sounded arrogant had it not been for the fact that it was so evidently true. On the pitch, there is a swagger about Spain, an absolutely unshakable conviction about what they are doing; off it, humility remains the word.

"With this style, when they keep the ball, they are the best in the world," insisted the former Spain coach, Javier Clemente.

Suffering on the touchline, France coach Domenech could not agree more. "Spain have confirmed that they are one of the great favourites for the World Cup," he said. "They have exceptional talent and more importantly than that all of their talent is sacrificed for the collective good. They play without haste, there is no rush, and yet they do so with intensity and intent.

"Their circulation of the ball is spectacular and the final pass from their midfield is almost like a penalty."

Asked how he thought teams would deal with Spain in South Africa – the heavy hint being that opponents may try to kick the *seleccion* out of their stride – Domenech shrugged and looked on the bright side. "All I know is that it's almost impossible to get the ball when you play against Spain and that obliges opponents to think of any solution whatsoever," he said.

"Luckily, we wouldn't play Spain until the Final, so I don't need to think of that just yet."

Thierry Henry was equally effusive in his praise. "It's lovely to watch Spain on the television, but when you actually play against them you can't get the ball off them. It's impossible," he sighed. "I don't know if Spain will win in South Africa but they are stronger favourites than Brazil.

"They have Villa up front and then send on Torres. They have Xabi Alonso and Cesc, Iniesta, Xavi and Silva. It's incredible. They are a great side."

Henry's list was telling. Against France, Spain boasted Xavi, Senna, Navas and Torres...on the bench. The level of talent in the squad is astonishing, while the stability and continuity helps to bring the best out of them. There is no question mark over the style, few debates about selection – about the only one anybody can dream up surrounds which third goalkeeper should be taken to South Africa, which pretty much says it all – and there is a harmony about the squad that brokers no arguments. The results could be seen on the pitch in France.

But it's not just about Paris; it is about virtually every game Spain have played for the past three years. They have qualified for the World Cup

> "I don't know if Spain will win the World Cup, but they are stronger favourites than Brazil"
>
> *Thierry Henry*

having won an unprecedented 10 games out of 10 and no one doubted they were worthy winners of Euro 2008. In fact, they have won an incredible 33 of their last 34 competitive games (if you count beating Italy on penalties as a win).

It is true that their World Cup qualifying group was not the hardest – they had to overcome Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey – but they have also faced Argentina, France, England, Italy and the then-European champions, Greece, in friendlies, too, and beaten them all.

In February 2007, Spain beat England 1-0 at Old Trafford with a goal from Iniesta. Three years later, they have played 45 matches and lost just one, against USA in the semi-final of last year's Confederations Cup – and even that seems to have been good for them, serving as a timely warning against complacency. Only three teams have even managed to draw with them.

Forty-one wins in 45 matches, with 103 goals scored and 22 conceded is testament to their superiority.

Just realistic

No wonder the Spanish are getting excited. In the sports daily *Marca*, Angel Cabeza wrote: "Hands up any of you who did not go to bed last night with the feeling that no one can stop this team. Step forward those of you who doesn't think that, barring some major accident or a coincidence of strange events, that we're coming back from South Africa with the Cup under our arm. Too optimistic? No, just realistic. Watch the video of the game again and you'll see that I'm not sticking my neck out." No one stepped forward, no one put up their hands.

Spain must be considered favourites for the World Cup, and not because they do say so themselves.

This time, it was the French who turned Saint Denis into La Maestranza and said so for them. ●

Magnifique...Sergio Ramos (left) and David Villa were on target for Spain against France

Money for nothing

Player wages continue to rise despite the recession and mediocre performances

FRANCE

HOWARD JOHNSON in Paris

FRENCH FOOTBALL may not be regarded as one of the financial powerhouses of the European game, but you really shouldn't feel too sorry for the players plying their trade in Ligue 1 at the moment.

Take Moussa Sow, for example. The Rennes striker, with just three league goals in 20 matches so far this season and with just the barest handful of international caps for Senegal to his name, has opted to join Lille when he becomes a free agent in June.

His reported salary will be £106,000 a month, plus a supposed signing-on fee of £1.75million.

With the ongoing talk of financial meltdown, particularly in the world of football, such sums may seem incredible to most of us, but it appears there is no end to a top-flight footballer's ability to command eye-popping salaries and benefits; at least not when the same club's striker Jimmy Briand signs a three-year extension to his Rennes deal that will net him £132,000 a month, plus a tidy £1.3m re-signing fee. And all of this in a league that has average gates of 19,723 this season, down from 20,482 during the last campaign.

Such astronomical sums seem even harder to understand when, at the same time Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas was announcing half-yearly figures at his club were down by 11.5 per cent on the previous year, at Nice the board were laying down a new edict that their players will have to buy their own boots in future as a cost-cutting measure.

But if all of this is totally baffling, one thing at least is certain: you can expect French football supporters to have little or no sympathy for players who they perceive in general to be underperforming and over pampered. Two years ago Paris Saint-Germain fans vented their frustrations over their team's useless performances by vandalising defender Sylvain Armand's Porsche at the club's training ground. So no wonder PSG's top brass were reportedly furious with the same player when he recently bought himself a new car of the same make despite yet another lamentable league campaign.

Cashing in...Rennes striker Briand (in red) has netted himself a huge new deal with the club

> "As long as footballers' wages remain so inflated, only a fool would discount the idea of violence on the terraces increasing, born out of a very real sense of frustration"

Direct action

Of course, there can be no excuses for thuggish behaviour. But as long as footballers' salaries in France remain so inflated in a climate of recession, only a fool would discount the idea of violence on the terraces increasing, born out of a very real sense of frustration in a country where direct action against perceived injustice is very much part of the people's DNA.

Indeed, there have already been signs that hooliganism is on the rise in France, with one body – the fussily named Observatory Of Football Security – reporting violent incidents in and around Ligue 1 grounds are up by 36 per cent year on year. Such tensions were heightened recently when Paris police went public in claiming they had "very specific information" about planned violent activities by certain PSG fans against Marseille supporters heading to the capital for the big match at the end of February.

Amid so much brouhaha, it's been easy to forget that there has actually been some football going on.

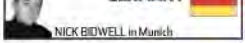
Montpellier beat Rennes 3-1 to go level at the top of the table with Bordeaux, though this doesn't tell the full story as Laurent Blanc's side had two matches in hand. Their game with Le Mans was called off due to bad weather the week after their meeting with Auxerre was postponed to allow them more time to prepare for their last-16 Champions League meeting with Olympiakos to help "benefit French football". And it was a move that paid off handsomely as Bordeaux won 1-0 away in the first leg.

Blanc will have done nothing to harm his increasingly burgeoning reputation with that win. It seems his only choices in the near future will be whether to continue his adventure on the French west coast, take up the national team reins after the World Cup or head off for a plum position at one of Europe's major clubs. ●

Uneasy peace...(left to right) Bierhoff, Zwanziger and Low will put their differences aside until after the World Cup

Split personalities

A bitter row over the renewal of national coach Joachim Low's contract threatens to overshadow Germany's World Cup


GERMANY

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

IT'S STRANGE how the concept of Germany's national team as a well-oiled, united entity has become common currency.

What with dressing-room cliques and daggers drawn (Bayern Munich and Koln factions in the mid-1980s), players wilfully defying authority (too many to mention) and a coach threatening to walk out during a World Cup (Helmut Schon in 1974), infighting has long formed part of the *Nationalmannschaft* scene.

And now we have another turf war, this time sparked by the breakdown of talks to renew the contract of *Bundestrainer* Joachim Low.

After plotting the runners-up spot at Euro 2008 and Germany's unbeaten qualification for World Cup 2010, Low – whose current deal runs out this summer – had looked a racing certainty to sign on for another tour of duty. The German FA (DFB), eager for continuity at the top, announced a week before Christmas they had shaken hands on a two-year extension with all the interested parties: Low, his assistant Hansi Flick, team manager Oliver Bierhoff, goalkeeper coach Andreas Kopke and chief scout Urs Siegenthaler. "From now on, we can concentrate in peace on our World Cup preparations," declared the DFB's chief, Theo Zwanziger.

But Zwanziger, it seems, had jumped the gun. As far as Low and his sidekicks were concerned, a comprehensive agreement had yet to be reached. And when more boardroom dancing failed to bear fruit, the DFB had no choice but to come clean, blaming the impasse on "structural problems and financial questions".

Talks have been put on ice until after the World Cup, though many believe that, no matter how well Germany perform there, Low's days are numbered and he will be replaced after the tournament by hugely ambitious DFB technical director Matthias Sammer.

According to a DFB insider, negotiations floundered on two main points: Low's demands for a signing-on fee of a year's salary for him and his staff, and Bierhoff's insistence that he should be given the right to veto any future national coach. Increasingly of the opinion that Low and Bierhoff were striving to augment their power base and build "a state within a state" at the DFB, Zwanziger held firm.

The gloves were off. Low and Bierhoff, incandescent with fury that details of supposedly secret discussions were in the public domain, accused the DFB of misrepresenting their demands and encouraging the media to portray the pair of them as machiavellian money-grabbers.

Bierhoff insisted he was only seeking a retrospective bonus for the entire national team staff and that the sums mentioned in the press had been wildly inflated, while Low was especially angered by an 11th-hour "take it or leave it" contract proposal.

"I've worked with the DFB for six years, four as *Bundestrainer*, and was astonished to be offered a contract and told I had just two days to accept or not," complained an unusually tetchy Low. "I shouldn't have been handed such an ultimatum. It has annoyed me a lot, as has the appearance in the press of confidential details of the negotiations. It's out of order and I've told the president so.

"Anyone familiar with me knows I'm driven by sporting issues, not money and power. We would have preferred this matter to have turned out differently but I can live with it and will continue to be thoroughly focused on my job."

> "I was astonished to be given a contract and told I had just two days to accept it or not...it's out of order and I've told the president so"
>
> *Joachim Low isn't happy with the DFB*

Unpopular Bierhoff

Many believe a deal would have been concluded long ago if former Germany striker Bierhoff was not part of the equation. Thanks to the latter's numerous clashes with Sammer – they fight like cat and dog for control over Germany Under-21s – the perception is that Bierhoff is a rather haughty personality. He is Mr Unpopular both within and outside the committee rooms and it is an open secret that many at the DFB would like him gone. Just one hitch, though – he is joined at the hip to Low; they come as a package.

Although Zwanziger has tried to play down the spat ("it's not a question of life or death for the nation if the *Bundestrainer* has much or little time left on his contract"), he knows only too well it may cost Germany dear at the World Cup.

While not quite a dead man walking, Low's authority has taken a severe knock and fissures in leadership run the risk of setting a fragmented tone for the entire *Nationalmannschaft* party in South Africa.

Zwanziger, Low, Bierhoff, the squad; everyone could end up a loser in this sorry business. Everyone, that is, except a certain Matthias Sammer. ●

The *tormentoni*

National coach Marcello Lippi still has a number of selection dilemmas to resolve

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

AT THE START of the season, looking forward to the World Cup finals in June, Italy coach Marcello Lippi said he was ready for any number of *tormentoni* (literally, pest or nuisance) on the run-in to South Africa.

The *tormentoni* in question, let's be clear, do not concern player injuries, match schedules or training facilities. No, these torments are media and fan inspired and take the form of pretty forthright "advice" as to who he should take to the finals this summer. In particular, Lippi was bombarded with suggestions for his attack.

It all started with Sampdoria's Antonio Cassano, who is not only an immensely talented player but one who was in excellent form last autumn. However, Cassano recently disappeared from the public eye because of injury and being dropped by his club, and as he faded from view so the clamour for his recall to the national team largely disappeared.

At the beginning of the season there was also much speculation about a call-up for Juventus' Brazil-born forward Amauri, who was due to become a naturalised Italian. But, like others at Juve, has suffered from the team's mid-season crisis and the subsequent sacking of coach Ciro Ferrara, and so indifferent has been his form of late that, if and when his Italian citizenship comes through, Lippi may well ignore him.

Then there is the old warhorse Luca Toni, who left Bayern Munich for Roma in January so he might play his way back into the World Cup squad. After a promising start back in Serie A, Toni looked to be doing just that until an injury struck him down.

Nor can Lippi be too confident about another of his trusted front men, Vincenzo Iaquinta. He has not played since Juve's 1-1 draw with Fiorentina in October and, though he is set to return soon, for the time being a large question mark has to hang over Iaquinta's eventual inclusion in the squad for South Africa.

And then there is the question of Internazionale's Mario Balotelli. Big, strong and fast, the 19-year-old can play up front as a central target figure or on either of the flanks. His recent form for an Inter side in which he is used sparingly and wisely by Jose Mourinho has been outstanding, with his splendid goal in Inter's 3-2 away win over Udinese not going unnoticed.

Speaking at Coverciano, however, Lippi appeared to exclude a call-up for the teenager, arguing that he must first complete "the journey of maturation" that Inter and Mourinho have planned for him. Then and only then, will he be ready for the national team, added Lippi, implying that this will come sometime after South Africa.

Last seen for Italy in a 3-1 friendly win against Belgium just prior to Euro 2008, Milan striker Marco Borriello was recalled for the 0-0 draw with Cameroon in March. Although he had a quiet game and received little in the way of decent service, his return to the side looks highly significant and he could well be the main man up front in South Africa.

More than satisfied

Lippi pronounced himself more than satisfied with the Cameroon game, saying he had learned a lot from a largely improvised Italy team labour hard against Paul Le Guen's team.

Forced by injuries to experiment, Lippi introduced two newcomers in the shape of Bari's 22-year-old central defender Leonardo Bonucci and Cagliari's 29-year-old schemer Andrea Cossu. In the circumstances, against robust opposition who were more concerned with shutting down the Italians than attacking themselves, both newcomers did well. Lippi commented afterwards: "Both made a good impression. They showed quality and personality, and are definitely in with a chance of making it to South Africa. I mean, I didn't bring them here just as a little present..."

Bonucci, in particular, looks like an interesting find. Part of a Bari side that has played some of the best football seen in Serie A this season, he may step into a position that had probably been left vacant for Alessandro Nesta.

> **"The distinct impression remains that were Nesta to have a late change of mind he would still be more than welcome in the squad"**

Speaking two days before the Cameroon game, Lippi seemed to confirm that, despite overtures and entreaties from both the coach himself and from Italy team-mates, Nesta had declined the invitation to return to play for Italy in South Africa.

The distinct impression remains, however, that, were Nesta to have a late change of mind, he would still be more than welcome in the squad.

When the going got tough during the qualifying campaign, Lippi made no apologies about relying heavily on many of the players with whom he had won the World Cup in Germany. Against Cameroon, he fielded only four of the players who featured in the Berlin Final – Fabio Cannavaro, Daniele De Rossi, Gennaro Gattuso and Andrea Pirlo.

Of course, this was because Gigi Buffon, Gianluca Zambrotta, Fabio Grosso, Mauro Camoranesi and Luca Toni were all injured, while two other Berlin heroes, Marco Materazzi and Simone Perrotta, have since been dropped from the World Cup squad.

On top of that, Francesco Totti has not yet decided whether or not he will accept a recall to a team for which he last played in that Final.

So, just how many of the above will be fit and ready in June? And if they are all there, how smart an idea is it to rely on a team chassis that, frankly, has an awful lot of miles up on the clock?

Judged on present form, you could argue that only De Rossi, Pirlo and Buffon from the 2006 side are certainties for South Africa.

Despite all that, there is little doubt that many of the Berlin heroes will feature again this summer. The impression gleaned from the Cameroon match, however, is that there will also be space for new recruits such as defenders Bonucci and Domenico Criscito, midfielder Claudio Marchisio and striker Giuseppe Rossi.

Given recent performances, they will all be more than welcome. ●

Falling into place...the return of Borriello (right) to the Italy side could indicate he has will be on the plane to South Africa

Treading water

Lyn's lesson has given the top clubs a financial reality check

NORWAY

SIGURD ODEGAARD in Oslo

IN 2009 NORWAY'S top clubs faced a new financial reality. Thanks to lucrative media deals that had given them loads of money, players' wages had spiralled out of control and the clubs had invested in short-term foreign buys. Sooner or later, though, the bubble would burst; even the strongest clubs have struggled to steer through the difficulties.

Lyn from Oslo were in trouble all season, both on and off the field, and appeared doomed financially. They were finally saved after months of turmoil and have been allowed to continue in level two after being relegated from the top flight.

Since 1991 there have been 26 near-bankruptcies in Norwegian's top division, but never before has a club come closer to the grave than Lyn. In order to survive they had to sell players such as Kim Holmen, Paul Obiefule, Davy Angan, Erling Knudtzon and Magne Simonsen, and they will have to turn to their youngsters this season.

For years, most clubs dealt with the fact that if financial problems occurred a "rich uncle" or a local bank would move in and solve their problems. The global financial crisis has changed all that and clubs have been forced to solve the problems on their own.

Lyn's situation was followed closely by the other clubs who were quick to reduce costs. Oslo neighbours Valerenga have been forced to limit the purchase of new players and coach Martin Andresen nearly lost top striker Mohammed "Moa" Abdellaoue this winter. The members of the coaching staff were cut as well.

Goodbye to all that...midfielder Obiefule was one of several players sold by crisis club Lyn

> "We did not sell one player last season. Compared to Rosenborg, we are minnows who can't compete on their level"
>
> *Brann sporting director Roald Bruun-Hansen spells it out*

The transfer window in Norway is open until the end of March and sports director Truls Haakonsen will try to secure new players.

He says: "All Norwegian clubs have an extreme focus on balancing the books now. We believe it is possible to aim for a top spot with a squad that do not put us in economical jeopardy."

Desperate for success

Even Rosenborg, who are in a unique position with millions in the bank after so many seasons with success in Europe, have had to tighten their belt. The budget for 2010 has a £2.45million deficit and last year's deficit was double that. Rosenborg are desperate for success again and must rely on new European glory to turn things around.

Brann, who reported a £2.2m loss last year, have been forced to reduce their squad this season by five and the backroom staff have also been cut.

Sports director Roald Bruun-Hansen says: "We did not sell a single player last season.

"Compared to Rosenborg, who sold Alexander Tettey for £4.4m and still have a large deficit, we are minnows who can't compete on their level."

Brann winger Erik Huseklepp, who has been tracked by foreign clubs, will be sold if the price is right.

Stabaek are also feeling the pinch and their costly new indoor stadium Telenor Arena does not exactly make their situation easier. Coach Jan Jonsson is happy to see Veigar Pall Gunnarsson back but will mostly have to rely on last year's squad.

Fredrikstad, relegated after losing out in the play-offs, have certainly felt the pain of this situation. The local municipality had to give them a loan guarantee and the club terminated coach Tom Nordlie's contract and appointed the less expensive Tom Freddy Aune. A reduced squad will play in the second division's most attractive stadium this term.

The positive side of the economic plight is that clubs are investing in bringing forward their own talent. Last season 71 players under 20 represented the 16 clubs in league matches compared to 48 the previous season.

Youngsters like Marcus Pedersen (Stromsgodset), Mads Stokkelien (Start), Mikkel Diskerud (Stabaek) and Harmeet Singh (Valerenga) were given enough opportunities last year to make real progress. This season should see others breaking through. ●

Costly outlay...Stabaek's indoor Telenor Arena

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Gold medallists...Hong Kong players celebrate their penalty shoot-out victory over Japan

On a high

Confidence is rising in the former British colony

HONG KONG

MICHAEL CHURCH in Hong Kong

CONFIDENCE IN SPORT is a fragile thing and not something the footballers of Hong Kong have ever had in abundance.

And yet, after securing a penalty shoot-out victory over Japan in the Final of the East Asian Games in December, there is a buoyancy within the game in the former British colony that has not existed for years.

Not even three straight defeats at the East Asian Championship, held two months later, could shatter the feel-good factor that has filtered into the sport in Hong Kong since August 2009. That was when coach Kim Pan-gon oversaw a 0-0 draw with World Cup-bound North Korea – a game in which Hong Kong striker Chan Siu-ki also missed a penalty and an open goal – to record their most impressive result since Hong Kong beat China 2-1 in Beijing in a World Cup qualifier in 1985.

The draw ensured Hong Kong qualified for the finals of the East Asian Championship, but it also sparked off a chain of events that have raised the profile of the local game.

Hong Kong, like many of the lands previously ruled by the British, remains in the thrall of the Premier League and blanket coverage of the English game on cable television has stifled interest in the local game.

Where once the city's leading clubs could pull in crowds of 25,000 for major matches, in recent years those figures have dropped to an average of around 10 per cent of previous highs.

In the second half of 2009, though, that all changed.

South China, the city's leading club, reached the semi-finals of the AFC Cup – the first time a team from the territory had made a significant impact on a continental tournament since the same club lost in the Final of the 1994 Asian Cup-winners Cup.

A crowd of almost 25,000 turned out for the second leg against Kuwait Sports Club but, despite seeing their side slip to a 3-1 defeat on aggregate, it was a sign of things to come for Hong Kong football.

By December, the city was hosting the East Asian Games, a biennial, multi-sports event that features a football tournament with up-and-coming players from Japan and China, as well as North and South Korea.

Hong Kong's prospects, as is usually the case when facing off against the powerhouses of the region, were minimal at best but, after wins over South Korea, China and North Korea, Kim and his team met Japan in the Final.

Once again the fans flocked to Hong Kong Stadium and, amid an atmosphere of patriotic fervour rarely seen in a city that has long had issues with its identity, the home side prevailed on penalties.

> "Qualification for the East Asian Championship sparked off a chain of events that raised the profile of the local game"

Heroes overnight

Since then, interest in the game has soared and players such as Chan – who had flown back from a week's trial in England with Tottenham Hotspur to play in the Final and scored Hong Kong's equalizer with his first touch after appearing from the bench – became heroes overnight.

The East Asian Championship may have been a disappointment, but coach Kim used the opportunity to blood a new generation of players, such as 19-year-old goalkeeper Yapp Hun-fai who impressed on his debut.

Kim remains under no illusions regarding the future of the team and of Hong Kong football in general.

"We are still too far from Korea and Japan and, just because once you get the gold medal, you can't change much," he says. "It has just given us confidence, but now we need to invest more than before. Given the quality of our football and the football culture in Hong Kong, we still are too far behind these countries.

"It's not going to take 10 years, it's going to be 20 or more if we want to catch Korea or Japan. "We have to change the league system; everything has to change.

"One gold medal can't change it but I hope that it can be the start of something." ●

Back to the future

A return to part-time football may be the only way to avoid more clubs going the way of Cork City

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

SEAN CREEDON in Dublin

THE IRISH ECONOMY is struggling to climb out of the worst recession to hit the country in more than 20 years and professional football is one of the many areas badly hit.

While Giovanni Trapattoni's international side, comprised of players from English clubs, continues to grind out good results, the domestic game struggles to compete with the rival attractions of Rugby Union, Gaelic football and hurling.

At the end of last season over 90 per cent of the players in the League of Ireland were out of contract. Some had difficulty finding new clubs and many had to take a cut in wages.

The situation was so bad the Professional Footballers Association (PFAI) organised training sessions for unemployed players so they could keep in shape. The PFAI also organised friendlies to help them find new clubs.

The FA of Ireland (FAI), who took over the running of the league from the League of Ireland Management Committee a few years back, is trying to keep the show on the road by implementing strict licensing rules which mean all clubs now have to submit a budget for the season ahead to the Association.

PFAI chief Stephen McGuinness believes licensing is the way forward, explaining: "It is the key to getting things right in the League of Ireland, but the calendar is out of sync.

"The FAI set dates for budget submissions, but there are no sanctions for clubs that fail to comply.

"Three weeks before the start of the season nobody knew for certain what teams would be playing in the Premier Division."

Last season Cork City had a few scares, but survived and even qualified for the Europa League. However, the club's failure to settle a tax bill with the Revenue Commissioners saw them wound up in the High Court in February. Having survived previous winding-up orders, the Association had been very patient – some clubs would say too patient – in holding out to see if Cork could solve their financial problems, even including them in this season's Premier Division fixture list until their ultimate demise.

> **"Three weeks before the start of the season nobody knew for sure which teams would be playing in the Premier League"**
>
> *PFAI chief Stephen McGuinness*

After examining the various budget proposals the FAI issued 14 Premier Division licences and seven First Division licences for the 2010 season, with Derry City – who were found to be operating dual contracts with their players last season and were expelled from the Premier Division – in the latter category.

False dawns

A switch to a full-time, professional set-up a few years back brought a few false dawns, with clubs such as Shelbourne, Bohemians and St Patrick's Athletic notching up some good results in Europe. Those good European runs could also be attributed to a switch to summer football.

However, sooner or later, players, clubs and the FAI must realise that they will have to revert to part-time football once again. Playing matches with Sunday afternoon kick-offs, as in the 1960s and 70s, is not yet an option, but at this stage anything may be worth a try.

"I think we are already nearly back to part-time football," says McGuinness. "In recent months we have seen some of our players emigrate to Australia and others join clubs in the lower divisions in England to stay in football. This season only two clubs, Bohemians and Sporting Fingal, will have a full-time set-up over 52 weeks of the year. Players may train full-time, but there are no jobs in Ireland right now, so they will have to make do with part-time wages. However, I think our good results in Europe will continue because the clubs who have qualified are well organised."

Former St Patrick's Athletic chief executive Richard Sadlier summed up the situation at most clubs when he said: "Convincing players to take voluntary pay cuts in the long-term interest of a club they know they will leave in a year or two is a big ask." ●

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No place to go... Cork City fans saw their club go out of business over tax problems

Heading in the right direction...Nagoya Grampus' Kennedy (top) beats the Gamba Osaka defence in the Emperor's Cup Final in January

Rising talents

Two clubs who have never won the J.League look set to mount a serious challenge to champions Kashima Antlers

JAPAN

MIKE PLASTOW in Tokyo

IF YOU ARE looking for a surprise in the new J.League season you could do worse than glance at the national side. Takeshi Okada called up eight players from Tokyo and Nagoya Grampus (four each) for the East Asian Football Championship in February – the same number as from the big four of Kashima Antlers, Kawasaki Frontale, Gamba Osaka and Urawa Reds combined.

If this represents something of a shift in the balance of power in Japanese football, it did not surface in the J.League last season. But 2010 could be the year it does.

Of course, the sensible money remains on Kashima and Kawasaki, who have both made promising close-season signings and should be stronger than ever. For the first time since 2007, Kashima begin a campaign with their full complement of foreign players, and Junichi Inamoto – back in Japan for World Cup year – is a major reinforcement for Kawasaki's sometimes frail midfield.

While Kashima look for a fourth consecutive championship, Tokyo and Grampus – like Kawasaki – have never won the J.League. Tokyo's best finish was fourth in 2003, while Grampus were second in 1996, having begun the season with Arsene Wenger and finished it under Carlos Queiroz.

Tokyo coach Hiroshi Jofuku was a low-profile player who has become a nurturing manager, slowly rising to prominence as national youth-team coach between 2002 and 2007. Tokyo are his first big club, though they were lingering in the bottom half of the table when he arrived and Jofuku probably only got the job because he was cheap. However, that thrifty investment is reaping huge dividends. Excluding that runners-up spot in 2003, Jofuku's first two years in charge have been Tokyo's best ever and the stream of talented young players just keeps on coming.

> **"If there is going to be a shift in the balance of power in Japanese football, 2010 could be the year"**

Jofuku has done it almost without spending. His captain, Naotake Hanyu, arrived from JEF Chiba in 2008 but there have been no comparable signings since. Brazil Under-20 striker Ricardinho and South Korea Under-20 defender Kim Young-gwon are Tokyo's first new foreigners since March 2008.

In goal, 20-year-old Shuichi Gonda made his international debut for Japan against Yemen in January, while full-backs Yuto Nagatomo and Yuhei Tokunaga are both heading for South Africa, and utility player Yasuyuki Konno is also a probable for this summer's World Cup.

Alongside Kim at centre-back is Masato Morishige, who represented Japan at the Beijing Olympics, and midfield is in the hands of Yohei Kajiyama, who was also at the 2008 Games, and last year's teenage sensation Takuji Yonemoto, who was the best new player of the League Cup and man of the match in the Final as Tokyo beat Kawasaki Frontale 2-0.

Attacking midfielders Hanyu and Naohiro Ishikawa have both been capped by Japan and tall striker Sota Hirayama broke into the national team with a hat-trick from the bench in that January game against Yemen. Attack was Tokyo's biggest weakness last year after Cabore was lured to Al Arabi of Qatar, but Hirayama's recent form and Ricardinho's arrival suggest things could change.

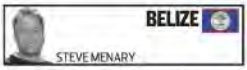
Over at Grampus, mercurial coach Dragan Stojkovic – a former captain of Yugoslavia and president of the Yugoslav FA – must also be very confident about his new signings.

Defence has been shored up with the arrival of Japan regular Tulio Tanaka from Urawa and Albirex Niigata veteran Mitsuru Chiyotanda, and midfield bolstered with Colombia's Danilson Cordoba from Consadole Sapporo and exciting 20-year-old Mu Kanazaki from Oita Trinita, who has already been capped three times by Japan.

Young centre-back Maya Yoshida has left for VVV Venlo in Holland, but with the likes of Josh Kennedy, Keiji Tamada, Magnum, Yoshizumi Ogawa, Alex and veteran Japan keeper Seigo Narazaki already in place, things are looking good for Stojkovic's side. ●

The big prize

A Honduran World Cup hero has given regional minnows Belize hope of Gold Cup qualification



STEVE MENARY

NEW NATIONAL coach Jose De la Paz Herrera certainly can't complain about a lack of preparation time in his new job. Having pipped Carlos Del Toro – an Argentinian living in Costa Rica – to the Belize job at the start of 2010, the Honduran must wait over a year before his first competitive match.

"It's all a challenge," says Herrera, who coached Honduras to the 1982 World Cup finals and was also in charge for the 2006 qualifiers. "This is what attracted me most to the Belize proposal. There is a lot to do and we are starting from almost zero."

That might sound harsh, but Herrera is simply being honest. While Honduras are regional giants, Belize are minnows. The seven regional associations – Belmopan, Belize District, Cayo, Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creen and Toledo – that make up the Football Federation of Belize (FFB) all run their own competitions, but they are strictly amateur. The Belize Premier League, meanwhile, is semi-professional but membership has fallen from a dozen clubs to just eight, with Belize Defence Force the reigning champions.

And despite the FFB receiving £0.75million from FIFA's GOAL fund between 2001 and 2007, the country still lacks a FIFA-standard stadium.

"This is a big problem," admits FFB president, Dr Bertie Chimilio. "For internationals we have no suitable stadium."

Belize was formerly the colony of British Honduras and the FFB was founded in 1980 – a year before independence. Belize joined FIFA in 1986 but did not enter any international competitions for a decade.

> **"It's all a challenge. There is a lot to do and we are starting from zero"**
>
> *Jose De la Paz Herrera*

After failing to qualify for the 1996 CONCACAF Gold Cup, Belize entered the 1998 World Cup qualifiers but success was minimal. Amid internal turmoil, the FFB did not even try to qualify for the 2003 Gold Cup.

Reason for optimism

Yet amidst all this, there is reason for optimism in Belize with the appointment of Herrera.

FFB technical director for development Renan Couoh was all set to take the national job purely because Chimilio did not expect to be able to recruit such a strong candidate.

But now Couoh can concentrate on running the youth teams, while Herrera can look forward to next year's UNCAF Nations Cup in Costa Rica, where Belize captain and goalkeeper Shane Orio plays for Ramonense. The biannual competition is Belize's most regular international foray and offers a chance for Gold Cup qualification.

Of the other six teams in the Central American Football Union (UNCAF), three – Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador – have appeared in the World Cup finals and are unbeatable, but, with five teams qualifying for the Gold Cup, Belize will be hoping to beat Guatemala, Nicaragua or Panama.

So far that has never happened. Belize have drawn three and lost 14 UNCAF matches since 1995, but progress is being made.

In the 2010 World Cup qualifiers, Belize won a tie for the first time. Forced to play their home leg in Guatemala City, they beat St Kitts 3-1 before drawing 1-1 in the return at Warner Park in Basseterre to secure a second round tie with Mexico.

Despite a predictable 9-0 aggregate defeat, Chimilio is more optimistic than ever and he believes that qualification for the 2011 Gold Cup is a realistic target for Herrera and his side. ●

Foot race...Shannon Flowers of Belize (right) takes on Nicaragua's Samuel Wilson in last year's UNCAF Nations Cup

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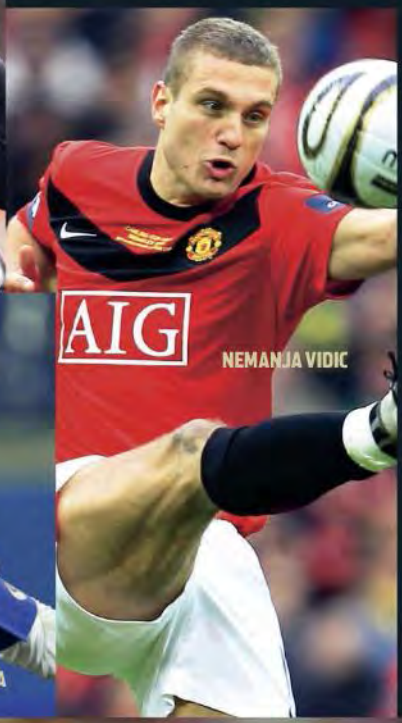
EUROPE'S MOST WANTED

The summer transfer window is expected to be busy despite football's deepening recession. Nick Bidwell and Gavin Hamilton report

FRANCK RIBERY

CESC FABREGAS



NEMANJA VIDIC

DAVID VILLA

SERGIO AGUERO

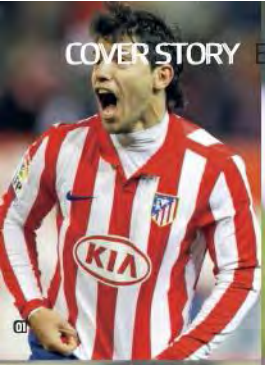
SERGIO AGUERO
ATLETICO MADRID
COST: £45million
POTENTIAL BUYER:
Chelsea

CESC FABREGAS
ARSENAL
COST: £60million
POTENTIAL BUYER:
Barcelona

FRANCK RIBERY
BAYERN MUNICH
COST: £70million
POTENTIAL BUYER:
Real Madrid

NEMANJA VIDIC
MANCHESTER UNITED
COST: £30million
POTENTIAL BUYER:
Real Madrid

DAVID VILLA
VALENCIA
COST: £45million
POTENTIAL BUYER:
Manchester United



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THE GLOBAL RECESSION may have forced most European clubs to cut their cloth accordingly – and forced some out of business entirely – but a handful of clubs will continue to spend heavily on reinforcements this summer. The usual suspects will lead the spending, as Chelsea and Manchester City (debt-free and backed by billionaire owners) tussle with Barcelona and Real Madrid (boosted by their stranglehold on Spanish TV revenues) for some of the game's most desirable players. And the biggest headlines are likely to be generated by three players who can reasonably be expected to star at this summer's World Cup finals in South Africa: Cesc Fabregas, Franck Ribery and David Villa.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta was quick to deny stories suggesting that Fabregas would be returning to the club he left in controversial circumstances when he turned 18.

"In accordance with FIFA regulations, FC Barcelona's contract policy has always made it a priority to negotiate with the club of origin before making any particular agreement with the player," Laporta insisted. However, the mood in Barcelona is one of quiet confidence that Fabregas will return to his alma mater. Xavi believes the Arsenal skipper will end up at Camp Nou one day because the club "is in his blood".

Crucially, presidential elections take place this summer when Laporta's term of office ends. The leading candidates – including former vice-president Sandro Rosell, who is the front runner – are all expected to make Fabregas' return central to their manifestos.

In recent months, the Madrid media have gone quiet on any possible Fabregas move to the capital, an indication that it has been accepted that Barcelona may have got their man.

Real Madrid are preparing for another summer of transfer deals under the second coming of Florentino Perez, with the president pursuing his strategy of signing eye-catching "big brand" players. Any business is expected to be conducted after the World Cup and could involve a major name from the tournament if 2002, the last World Cup when Perez was in charge, is anything to go by. Then, Madrid signed the injury-prone Ronaldo on the back of his World Cup-winning performances for Brazil.

That may help to explain the stories linking Madrid with Wayne Rooney. After Madrid's deals to sign David Beckham and Michael Owen, Perez is well aware of the commercial power of the English football market.

Madrid would probably need to break the world record to tempt Manchester United to do business. A complicating factor is that Rooney's advisors could use any possible interest to negotiate a new deal with United, whose balance sheet was eased by the sale of Cristiano Ronaldo to Madrid. A year on, it is more likely United will use Nemanja Vidic, rather than Rooney, to boost their coffers.

A more realistic target for Madrid is Bayern Munich's French winger Franck Ribery. Last summer, Bayern bought Arjen Robben from Madrid in what many Spanish observers interpreted as the first stage in a deal that will end in the capture of Ribery. The player has certainly done little to discourage the feeling, claiming: "I think my future will be sorted out before the World Cup. I'll speak with my agent and then talk to Bayern. It will be short and painless. I don't want to be part of a soap opera.

"A lot has been said about me moving to Real Madrid or Chelsea. They are two outstanding clubs. But nothing is settled yet. Like everyone, I prefer clarity, to know exactly what the future holds. Whatever happens, it will be my decision."

David Villa is another who remains on Madrid's radar. Valencia's financial situation means they are more than likely to cash in their prize asset this summer, though coach Unai Emery will fight to hold on to Villa's national team-mate David Silva.

Villa is known to be keen to remain in Spain, but the biggest offers are likely to come from England.

Plus ca change.

SERGIO AGUERO
ATLETICO MADRID

Whispers that the talented Argentinian attacker is Chelsea-bound will not go away. The son-in-law of Diego Maradona is just the sort of intuitive forward Blues owner Roman Abramovich loves and the Russian oligarch would shell out the £45million asking price at the drop of a hat.

MARIO BALOTELLI
INTERNAZIONALE

It's an open secret in Italy that there is no love lost between the headstrong young forward and Jose Mourinho, his coach at Inter. Balotelli is tired of the role of supersub and he could well be looking to exit the San Siro soon. A top Premier League address seems to be the likely destination.

KARIM BENZEMA
REAL MADRID

With the France striker failing to pull up many trees following his £30million transfer from Lyon last summer, his future at the Bernabeu has inevitably come into question – and the rumour mill has Madrid president Florentino Perez offering a cut-price Benzema to Milan or Internazionale.

ASHLEY COLE
CHELSEA

Cast as the pantomime villain by the UK tabloid press for his matrimonial infidelities, and with his relationship with the Chelsea powers-that-be severely strained, the England left-back could be looking to make a fresh start as a migrant. Take it as read that Internazionale, Real Madrid and Barcelona will not be put off by his capacity for scandal.

JOE COLE
CHELSEA

The mercurial midfield virtuoso has started only sporadically for the Stamford Bridge club since spending nine months on the sidelines with a knee injury and his patience seems to be running out. And so is his contract. This summer he will be available on a Bosman free and there should be no shortage of takers at home or abroad.

ANGEL DI MARIA
BENFICA

The willowy and cultured young Argentina left-winger extended his contract with Benfica last autumn, but in truth the agreement was more to do with his current employers upping the ante. Benfica president Luis Filipe Vieira is looking for the best part of £30million and both Manchester City and Chelsea are enamoured enough to accommodate him.

EDIN DZEKO
WOLFSBURG

Although not nearly as prolific in front of goal this season as he was last term, the current Bosnian player of the year remains one of the most complete strikers in Europe today and has a veritable army of admirers. Milan, the club he has supported since childhood, are assumed to be in pole position, though a Premier League big-hitter might be financially better equipped to stump up the £40million needed to trigger the release clause in his contract.

MATHIEU FLAMINI
MILAN

So effective during his time at Marseille and Arsenal, the French midfield dynamo has been a virtual spectator since joining Milan from the Gunners in the summer of 2008. While his hara-kiri approach to the game is thought unintelligent in Serie A, his stock in the Premier League and Ligue 1 remains high.

DIEGO FORLAN
ATLETICO MADRID

Juventus do appreciate experience up front – they currently boast Amauri, Alessandro Del Piero, David Trezeguet and Vincenzo Iaquinta – and, according to Spanish radio station *Cadena Ser*, the Turin club are keen on recruiting another thirty-something in the shape of the free-scoring Uruguay striker. A return to the Premier League, where he once featured for Manchester United, cannot be discounted either.

PEDRO GEROMEL
ROMA

Juventus, Bayern Munich and Real Madrid are reported to be in a three-way battle for the signature of the elegant Brazilian central defender, who is regarded as one of the best in his position in the Bundesliga. And let's face it, why would he not be keen to jump off a Koln ship which appears to be sinking?

GERVINHO
LILLE

In fine goalscoring and creative fettle this season following his move last summer from Le Mans to Lille, this versatile Ivory Coast international – who is equally comfortable playing as an attacking midfielder, winger or second striker – has never hidden his desire to one day play in England or Spain. While the Lillois board would ideally want to keep the 22-year-old for another year at least, the chance of making a quick and hefty profit on their £8million investment may prove to be too tempting.

MAREK HAMSIK
NAPOLI

Internazionale coach Jose Mourinho is reported to have told club owner Massimo Moratti that he requires more class in the middle of the park, identifying the all-action Slovak as his top priority. Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis claims the 22-year-old is "untransferable", but a £30million offer from Moratti or another Euro moneybags may bring him round.

HERNANES
SAO PAULO

The highly rated Brazil midfielder looked odds-on to leave for Europe last summer but no club seemed prepared to meet Sao Paulo's hefty valuation. Money may still be tight but at least one Bundesliga or Serie A side should take the plunge this summer.

LUIS FABIANO
SEVILLA

An iron-clad guarantee of goals for Sevilla and Brazil, he has been linked strongly with leading clubs in Italy and Spain in each of the last two summers, only for Sevilla to hang on to their prize asset by their fingernails. This year, however, the Andalucians are likely to cash in, their resolve diluted by the prospect of a £25million-plus windfall.

MIGUEL VELOSO
SPORTING LISBON

Serious sources in Portugal insist Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson likes the look of Sporting's defensive midfielder, who probably would cost around £10million. Everton, Genoa and Fiorentina are in the hunt as well.

MARC JANKO
SALZBURG

Tall, strong and athletic, the Austria and Salzburg goal machine does look tailor-made for the Premier League, where Blackburn Rovers are equally sweet on him and the value-for-money £5million price tag. Clubs in Germany, Spain (Espanyol) and Italy (Udinese, Genoa and Sampdoria) could also file into the auction rooms.

SIMON KJAER
PALERMO

In his second season at the Sicilian club, the Denmark centre-back continues to go from strength to strength. Even though Palermo's hard-hitting president Maurizio Zamparini swears he will do whatever it takes to retain him, it is hard to see him repelling cash-waving suitors such as Manchester United and Juventus.

MILOS KRASIC
CSKA MOSCOW

The intelligent right-sided Serbia midfielder has seen his reputation grow steadily in the last couple of years and his agent, Dejan Joksimovic, has a trans-continental bidding war on his hands. CSKA are demanding £18million, but around half that figure would suffice to prise him away.

MIRANDA
SAO PAULO

Brazil boss Dunga, not normally one to single out individuals for high praise, makes an exception in the case of this 25-year-old central defender, who he confidently predicts will make a splash in European football. Many technical directors in Germany and Italy agree, especially Milan's Ariedo Braida.

JESUS NAVAS
SEVILLA

Despite a propensity for terrible bouts of homesickness, the gifted right-winger is tipped by many in the Spanish media to move on this summer. Indeed, *Marca*, the unofficial mouthpiece of Real Madrid, claims president Florentino Perez is very much on the case. His release clause amounts to £60million, but Perez believes he can beat Sevilla down.

MANUEL NEUER
SCHALKE

Although Schalke boss Felix Magath repeatedly denies that his brilliant young goalkeeper is approaching the out door, the Gelsenkirchen club are not in the best of financial shape – and when push comes to shove they would probably not say no to a big-money proposition from the likes of Bayern Munich or Manchester United.

MAMADOU NIANG
MARSEILLE

After five years leading the line in Provence, the powerful Senegal striker is toying with the idea of a new challenge elsewhere and a clutch of clubs in England, Spain and Germany would jump at the chance of taking him on. Although under contract until 2014, any offer in the region of £10million will have a chance.

ADIL RAMI
LILLE

The excellent Franco-Moroccan centre-back had hoped to be given the green light to move to Marseille last summer but, much to his displeasure, he was told he was going nowhere. Twelve months on from what he described as a "betrayal", he should belatedly get his wish to leave, with Liverpool among the would-be buyers.

CRISTIAN RIVEROS
CRUZ AZUL

One of the most influential players in an over-achieving Paraguay side that has reached this summer's World Cup finals, the left-sided attacking midfielder has been persistently trailed by scouts from Portugal, Spain and the UK. The asking price at the moment is a ridiculously low £2.5million.

STEPHANE SESSEGNON
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

About to remodel their line-up for the umpteenth time, the struggling Parisiens hope to raise £15million or so from the sale of the Benin creative midfielder and use it to bring in three new faces. Expect strong interest from a clutch of Premier League clubs, who have long had him on their radar.

LUIS SUAREZ
AJAX

The Uruguay forward is having an outstanding time in front of goal this season in Amsterdam and, with the Premier League's big spenders hovering, Ajax will be sorely tempted to cash in.

JEREMY TOULALAN
LYON

The holding midfielder may not be the flashiest of footballers, but in terms of reliability and effectiveness he is top drawer. So it's easy to understand why Bayern Munich coach Louis Van Gaal is lobbying hard for the Frenchman's arrival in Bavaria. Internazionale also have him on their shopping list.

JUAN VARGAS
FIORENTINA

Real Madrid, Chelsea and Manchester City have all been linked with the fast-improving Peru left wing-back, whose dribbling and crossing ability have turned him into a huge Tuscan crowd favourite since he was signed from Catania in the summer of 2008. Reluctant to lose the 26-year-old, Fiorentina director of sport Pantaleo Corvino says he will only get out of bed to talk business if £20million is put on the table.

JAN VERTONGHEN
AJAX

There is increasing speculation around Europe that Ajax's impressive centre-back is on the verge of a switch to either a Premier League club or Barcelona. Also able to play full-back or as a defensive midfielder – which is his current role in the Belgium national team – the 22-year-old is considered to be a snip at £8million, hence the considerable interest.

NEMANJA VIDIC
MANCHESTER UNITED

His wife makes no bones about her dislike of the Greater Manchester scene and there have been suggestions that the Serbia central defender and Alex Ferguson are not the best of buddies. His agent says his client's dream is to play in Spain and it would be no real surprise if Vidic started next term in Real Madrid white or Barcelona's red and blue. Under contract to United until June 2012, his market worth is at least £30million.

DAVID VILLA
VALENCIA

That cash-strapped Valencia have managed to keep their star striker on board for so long is a minor miracle. However a £45million offer from the likes of Manchester United, Manchester City or Chelsea could cut through this year.

LAST YEAR WE SAID...

KAKA: his need for trophies "may push him out the San Siro exit and off to Real Madrid".
CRISTIANO RONALDO: "a record-breaking move to Real Madrid is remote but not impossible".
SAMUEL ETO'O: "what price the rumours of a swap deal with Ibrahimovic?"
EMMANUEL ADEBAYOR: "somewhat less than totally committed to the Arsenal cause".
DIEGO: "the most persistent rumours have the Brazil playmaker heading to Serie A, to either Inter or Juventus".
CARLOS TEVEZ: "must be tempted to move to a club where his skill and wholeheartedness will be more appreciated".
GARETH BARRY: "could push for a move if Aston Villa miss out on Champions League football".
GABRIEL HEINZE: "Real Madrid are looking to offload the Argentinian defender".
THIAGO MOTTA: "Italian champions Inter are hovering".
DIEGO MILITO: "a move up the Serie A food chain is distinctly possible".
YURI ZHIRKOV: "could link up with his compatriot, Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich".

01 SERGIO AGUERO
02 MARIO BALOTELLI
03 KARIM BENZEMA
04 ASHLEY COLE
05 JOE COLE
06 ANGEL DI MARIA
07 EDIN DZEKO
08 MATHIEU FLAMINI
09 DIEGO FORLAN
10 PEDRO GEROMEL
11 GERVINHO
12 MAREK HAMSIK
13 HERNANES
14 LUIS FABIANO
15 MIGUEL VELOSO
16 MARC JANKO
17 SIMON KJAER
18 MILOS KRASIC
19 MIRANDA
20 JESUS NAVAS
21 MANUEL NEUER
22 MAMADOU NIANG
23 ADIL RAMI
24 CRISTIAN RIVEROS
25 STEPHANE SESSEGNON
26 LUIS SUAREZ
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50 EVENTS THAT SHOCKED

In the third of our series celebrating *World Soccer*'s 50th anniversary,

1961
GREEN CROSS PLANE DISASTER

A plane crash in the Las Lastimas mountains in Chile accounted for 24 players from the Green Cross team of Santiago. Four years later the club, which was founded in 1916, merged with Deportes Temuco and was renamed Green Cross Temuco.

1962
BATTLE OF SANTIAGO

England's Ken Aston was the referee for this unsavoury encounter between World Cup hosts Chile and Italy. The first foul, and subsequent booking, came after just 12 seconds. Eight minutes later the culprit, Giorgio Ferrini of Italy, had been sent off. Chile's Leonel Sanchez then produced a left hook to floor Italy's Humberto Maschio, but amazingly he stayed on the pitch. However, he got his come-uppance a few minutes later when his neck met Mario David's studs. The Italian was instantly dismissed and so it went on, until Chile eventually won 2-0 against nine-man Italy. Leslie Page reported in *World Soccer* in August 1962: "Referee Ken Aston emerged with little credit. Although he had the most difficult game imaginable to control, and needed eyes in the back of his head, that does not lessen his responsibility. He made several bad decisions."

> "Three players were caught up in the biggest betting scandal to hit English football"

1964
SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY BETTING SCANDAL

Sheffield Wednesday players Tony Kay (above left), David Layne and Peter Swan were caught up in the biggest betting scandal to hit English football. In December 1962 they bet on their side to lose a match against Ipswich Town. The three were acting on the instigation of former Everton player Jimmy Gauld, who eventually sold his story to a Sunday tabloid, framing the three Wednesday players in the process. All four were imprisoned and banned from football for life.

1964
RIOT IN LIMA

More than 300 supporters were killed and another 500 injured following the decision by the referee to disallow a Peru goal with only a few minutes left to play in their Olympic Games qualifier against Argentina. The enraged home fans went crazy at the decision and many people were trampled on in the ensuing stampede. The lack of security and poor crowd control seemed to escalate the trouble. It is one of the worst disasters the game has witnessed.

1966
PELE KICKED OUT OF WORLD CUP

Pele went into the 1966 tournament far from fit and the opposition took advantage. In the first game, against Bulgaria, he was on the receiving end of some coarse challenges. Despite scoring and helping Brazil to a 2-0 win, Pele missed the second match due to injury. He returned for the final group game with Portugal but had not fully recovered and his opponents targeted him, virtually kicking him and Brazil out of the tournament.

1966
RAMSEY RANTS AT ARGENTINA

England won their World Cup quarter-final thanks to a Geoff Hurst goal, but it was manager Alf Ramsey who made the headlines when he labelled the Argentina team, who had captain Antonio Rattin sent off, as "animals" in a post-match press conference. At the end of the game Ramsey prevented his players from swapping shirts with their opponents.

FOOTBALL

World Soccer Magazine 50 Years 1960 - 2010

we select the most scandalous and tragic events of the past 50 years

Words: Duncan Bond

1968
SUPERCLASICO DISASTER

Various theories exist as to the cause of 70 deaths at the El Monumental stadium during the derby game between River Plate and Boca Juniors. One is that River fans were trying to get into the Boca section of the ground, causing the away fans to stampede. Others claimed that fans were crushed against a locked gate in the stadium. A third suggested that Boca fans set fire to River Plate scarves and began throwing them from the upper to lower tier, causing those below to panic, while an ex-River president blamed the police for repressing Boca fans after they had been pelted with bottles of urine. After a three-year investigation, no one was found guilty.

1969
THE SOCCER WAR

A four-day war, known as the "Soccer War", was fought between central American neighbours El Salvador and Honduras following a World Cup qualifier. Both countries were already in dispute over political matters and this coincided with crowd riots during the game in San Salvador. On July 14, 1969, the Salvadoran army launched military attacks on their neighbours, forcing the Organisation of American States to negotiate a ceasefire five days later. The dispute was eventually settled in 1980.

1969
THE STRONGEST PERISH

Eight years on from the Green Cross plane crash in Chile, 25 players and officials from a top Bolivian side, The Strongest, died when their plane came down in the Andes.

1970
BOBBY MOORE ARRESTED

Just prior to England's defence of the World Cup in Mexico, captain Bobby Moore was arrested and accused of stealing a bracelet from a hotel shop on a pre-tournament trip to Colombia. Moore and Bobby Charlton had gone to buy a present for Charlton's wife and as they left, the shop owner and his assistant called the police who took statements from both players and placed the England captain under house arrest. Moore was later released to play in the tournament but wasn't officially cleared until 1975, despite charges being dropped in 1972.

1971
IBROX DISASTER

After Celtic had taken an 89th-minute lead in January's Old Firm game, many Rangers supporters in the crowd of 80,000, started to leave the ground. But then Colin Stein scored a last-minute equaliser for the home side and. With now excited home fans in mid-departure, the barriers on stairway 13 at Ibrox began to give way, causing a massive pile-up of spectators which resulted in 66 deaths and over 200 injuries. The tragedy led to the introduction of a safety licence system for Scottish stadiums in 1975. In February 1971, World Soccer commented: "Although there are many dangerous grounds and dangerous staircases leading from them, it may mind not one of them compares for its lack of foresight with the Ibrox exit."

> "England captain Bobby Moore was arrested and accused of stealing a bracelet from a shop"

1974
ITALY OFFER BRIBE

With Italy needing a point from their last group game of the World Cup finals against Poland, their opponents, who had already qualified for the next round, accused them of offering money to lose the match. The Poles were having none of it and won the game 2-1, eliminating the 1970 finalists.

1974
LOBO-SOLTI CASE

Juventus escaped punishment following accusations that prior to a European Cup semi-final against Derby County at the Baseball Ground, they enlisted the help of a go-between, Deszo Solti, to try and bribe match referee Francisco Marques Lobo. Juventus won the tie 3-1 on aggregate.

1978
WILLIE JOHNSTON SCANDAL

After Scotland's humiliating opening defeat to Peru in the 1978 World Cup, midfielder Archie Gemmill was asked to provide the mandatory urine sample, but because he was so dehydrated, winger Willie Johnston took his place. His sample tested positive for the stimulant fencamfamin, contained in an over-the-counter medicine that Johnston had been taking. Despite the SFA keeping the story under wraps and Johnston denying any allegations, it eventually broke on a television news bulletin. From then on a bitter Johnston was banned and sent home in disgrace, claiming that he had been made a scapegoat by FIFA.

> "Johnston was banned and sent home in disgrace"

1978
ARGENTINA BEAT PERU

World Cup hosts Argentina went into their final second-phase group game against Peru needing to win by four clear goals to progress to the Final at the expense of Brazil. Despite Peru's Juan Munante hitting a post early on, the home side took the lead after 21 minutes through Mario Kempes and by half-time Alberto Tarantini had added a second. After the interval Argentina scored four more. Rumours were rife that Peru, whose keeper Ramon Quiroga was born in Argentina, had been bribed but these accusations could not be proved.

1978
SCOTTISH REFEREE SUSPENDED

John Gordon, Scotland's referee at the 1978 World Cup, plus linesmen Rollo Kyle and David McCartney were suspended by the Scottish FA after they accepted presents up to the value of £1,000 from Milan prior to a UEFA Cup tie against Levski Spartak. Milan, who eventually won the tie 4-1 on aggregate, were fined £8,000 by UEFA.

1980
TOTONERO BETTING SCANDAL

Paolo Rossi was the highest profile player of more than 30 who were banned for their part in match-fixing on behalf of an illegal betting syndicate operating in Italian football. After the investigation, Milan and Lazio were relegated, while Rossi was banned for two years.

1982
WEST GERMANY V AUSTRIA

Having lost their opening game to Algeria, West Germany were in danger of an early exit from the 1982 World Cup. A 1-0 win in their last group match against Austria would see both nations tied with Algeria (who had played their last game the previous day) on four points each. The North Africans, however, would go out due to an inferior goal difference. Horst Hrubesch scored after just 10 minutes and the remaining 80 were tedious in the extreme as both sides played out what was probably the most negative game in World Cup history.

1982
SCHUMACHER FOULS BATTISTON

In the 65th minute of the World Cup semi-final in Seville, with the score at 1-1, West Germany goalkeeper Harald Schumacher charged off his line and, making no attempt to play the ball, clattered into France full-back Patrick Battiston. Amazingly, Schumacher didn't receive a yellow card, let alone a red. Battiston, meanwhile, was helped from the pitch and needed oxygen in the dressing room before going to hospital. The game finished 3-3 and Schumacher, who shouldn't have been on the pitch, saved France's last penalty in the shoot-out before Horst Hrubesch sealed a place in the Final.

1982
MOSCOW STADIUM DISASTER

It is thought hundreds of fans perished at a European Cup tie between Spartak Moscow and Haarlem of Holland. The fatalities occurred when fans who were leaving near the end of the game tried to return after a late goal had been scored. The horrendous crush was exacerbated by police pushing some of the supporters down a narrow staircase. It is believed that a total of 340 people were killed, but Moscow officials claimed only 61 died and that the police did not push any fans.

1985
HEYSEL DISASTER

Thirty-nine people lost their lives when a wall collapsed at the decrepit stadium in Brussels that was hosting the European Cup Final between Liverpool and Juventus. An hour before kick-off trouble flared in a "neutral" section at the end of the

ground in which Liverpool fans were housed. Some Juventus fans had tickets for that area and as Liverpool fans went to confront them, the wall collapsed. The game still went ahead, mainly because UEFA hoped the football would cause a distraction to the fighting, and Juventus won 1-0. English clubs were subsequently banned from European competition for five years.

In August 1985, Brian Glanville wrote in *World Soccer*: "I shall never forget those pregnant minutes, that quivering hiatus, between the first charge made by the Liverpool fans and the final, murderous assault."

1985
BRADFORD FIRE

Eleven thousand supporters went to Valley Parade, Bradford, on May 11, 1985, to celebrate the club winning the English Third Division title; 56 never watched a game again, killed by a fire that engulfed the antiquated wooden stand in a matter of minutes. Another 265 people were injured, but

the fatalities could have been even worse if it hadn't been for the bravery of local police officers and 22 fans who helped pull injured victims from the blaze. Following the Popplewell Report a year later, legislation was brought in to make football stadiums in England all-seated.

1986
MARADONA'S "HAND OF GOD"

The little Argentina captain Diego Maradona virtually led his country to World Cup glory single-handedly in Mexico, but not before his side won the most controversial of quarter-finals, against England. The game turned in the 51st minute when Maradona embarked on one of his famous dribbles. Looking to play a quick one-two on the edge of the penalty area, the ball ricocheted off the foot of defender Terry Fenwick and looped in the air. Maradona had continued his run and out-jumped goalkeeper Peter Shilton to flick the ball into the net with his hand, conning Tunisian referee Ali Bin Nasser in the process. He later described the goal as "a little with the head of Maradona and a little with the hand of God."

> "The fatalities could have been even worse if it hadn't been for the bravery of local police officers and 22 fans who pulled injured victims from the blaze"

1986
ROMA EUROPEAN BAN

Roma president Dino Viola was banned for four years, and his club barred from Europe for a year, after he was found guilty of attempting to bribe the referee in their 1984 European Cup semi-final against Dundee United. Roma won 3-2 on aggregate.

1988
HUNGARIANS ARRESTED

International full-back Sandor Sallai (below left) and former national coach Kalman Meszoly were the highest-profile names to be arrested in a match-fixing scandal that engulfed Hungarian football. More than 40 players, officials and referees were charged and six leading clubs investigated in what was the third scandal to hit Hungarian soccer in a decade.

1989
HILLSBOROUGH DISASTER

On FA Cup semi-final day, 96 supporters lost their lives and many others were injured. Liverpool fans had been entering the Leppings Lane end and, 10 minutes before kick-off, there was a serious case of over crowding on the terracing, which was divided into five small pens by steel fencing. The two sections behind the goal were full, but fans outside were still trying to get into the stadium. Police gave the order to open an exit gate to alleviate the crush outside, which led to an estimated 2,000 fans heading for the two pens behind the goal. Supporters at the front of those pens were crushed against the fencing and, though some managed to escape onto the pitch and the tier of seating above the terrace, many perished.

> "Police gave the order to open an exit gate...which led to an estimated 2,000 fans heading for the two pens behind the goal"

1989
ROJAS FEIGNS INJURY

With 20 minutes to go, Chile were losing 1-0 away to Brazil in a World Cup qualifier and defeat would see them eliminated. In a hostile atmosphere, a firework was thrown from the crowd towards Chile keeper Roberto Rojas. Despite it landing a metre away, he fell to the floor with blood streaming from his head. He was carried off the pitch and the match was abandoned. Video evidence later proved Rojas had inflicted a wound himself, on orders from the touchline. FIFA awarded the game to Brazil and Rojas, along with Chile coach Orlando Aravena and team doctor Daniel Rodriguez, was banned for life.

ROJAS FLARE FARCE

In October 1989, Brian Homewood wrote in *World Soccer*: "Some photographers behind the goal said the flare had not touched Rojas. Far from being struck, he moved towards it then collapsed in a heap."

1992
CORSICA STADIUM DISASTER

The Furiani Stadium on the island of Corsica was the venue for a French Cup semi-final between Bastia and Marseille. In an attempt to double the seating capacity in the small ground, a temporary structure was erected. However, before the game started, the stand collapsed, killing 18 people and injuring more than 2,000.

1993
MARSEILLE SCANDAL

Soon after Marseille became the first French side to win the Champions League, club president Bernard Tapie was found guilty of bribing opponents Valenciennes to throw a game that secured his side the league and gave them extra time to prepare for the Final against Milan. OM were stripped of their league title, relegated for financial misdemeanours and expelled from Europe. They were, however, allowed to keep their Champions League crown.

1993
ZAMBIA PLANE CRASH

A military aircraft carrying the Zambia national team to Senegal for a World Cup qualifier crashed shortly after taking off, following a refuelling stop in Gabon, killing all 30 people on board. It is thought that the pilot, who had detected engine problems earlier in the flight, accidentally shut down the wrong engine causing the aircraft to lose all power.

1994
MARADONA'S WORLD CUP EXIT

Three years after he had fled Italy after failing a dope test, Diego Maradona played for Argentina at the World Cup, where he famously screamed into TV cameras after scoring against Greece and creating the winner against Nigeria. But on the eve of the game against Bulgaria, he tested positive for ephedrine and was sent home, never played for Argentina again – though he did return to watch the remainder of the tournament from the press box. In August 1996, *World Soccer* reported Sepp Blatter as commenting: "This is not an ordinary case because of the personality involved. I am very sad about what has happened."

1994
ESCOBAR MURDERED

Colombia defender Andres Escobar was shot dead in Medellin on his return from the 1994 World Cup in USA. His crime was scoring the own goal that gave the host nation a 2-1 win and eliminated the Colombians from the tournament. It is thought that drug barons and gangs were behind the killing.

1994-95
ENGLISH SEASON OF SLEAZE

It was a season to forget in English football. Goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar was charged with match-fixing allegations after he was the victim of a newspaper sting, hooliganism re-appeared when the Republic of Ireland v England friendly in Dublin had to be abandoned due to fighting at Lansdowne Road, and Arsenal manager George Graham (below) was sacked after he admitted to taking a "bung" – an illegal payment – of £425,000 from agent Rune Hauge following the signing of Danish midfielders John Jensen and Pal Lydersen.

1995
CANTONA KUNG-FU KICK

Having been sent off in a Premier League game for Manchester United at Crystal Palace, Eric Cantona was leaving the field when a Palace fan allegedly shouted insults at him. Instead of continuing towards the dressing rooms, Cantona turned and leapt at the startled fan, attacking him chest high with his right boot, before police and stewards eventually pulled him away. Cantona was banned from playing football for eight months, arrested by the police and sentenced to 120 hours community service.

1996
GUATEMALA STADIUM DISASTER

At least 83 people died and over 150 were injured when supporters stampeded at the Mateo Flores National Stadium in Guatemala City during a game against Costa Rica. The disaster occurred when fans outside the ground tried to get in by kicking down a door. This caused the fans inside the stadium to fall forward into the lower tier, where they were crushed at the front of the stand. FIFA said that the probable cause of the disaster was forged tickets that were in circulation before the game.

1998
RONALDO WORLD CUP FINAL SAGA

One of the biggest mysteries in football history occurred an hour before the 1998 World Cup Final when the Brazil team sheet was handed to the match referee without the name of Ronaldo on it. However, just before the teams came out for the kick-off, his name had reappeared on the team sheet. Rumours included the other Brazilian players had refused to take to the pitch without him, his sponsors Nike had insisted he play despite an alleged injury, and there were even whispers that he had been poisoned amid revelations of his love life. Eventually it was revealed that he had been rushed to hospital suffering convulsions and sickness. Although he made it back in time and was cleared to play, Brazil lost 3-0.

2001
ELLIS PARK DISASTER

Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg was already full to its 60,000 capacity for the match between Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, but there were thousands more fans still trying to get in when a Pirates goal sparked a crowd surge which resulted in the death of 43 people. It was also thought that untrained security guards firing tear gas made the situation worse.

> "Rumours about Ronaldo's absence included whispers he'd been poisoned"

2001
GHANA STADIUM DISASTER

The worst stadium disaster in Africa occurred at the Accra Sports Stadium. Hearts of Oak scored two late goals to beat Asante Kotoko 2-1 and, at the final whistle, some Kotoko fans began throwing plastic seats onto the pitch. When police fired tear gas in response, a stampede resulted in 127 people being crushed to death.

2001
DUTCH NANDROLONE SCANDAL

Edgar Davids (below left), who was with Juventus at the time, and Barcelona's Frank De Boer (below right) both tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone in the early part of 2001. De Boer was initially suspended for a year, but that was overturned soon after and he was allowed to start playing again. Davids also had a ban overturned. Later that year, defender Jaap Stam also tested positive for nandrolone and was banned for four months.

2002
FIFA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Sepp Blatter faced the biggest battle of his career to stay in charge of world governing body FIFA when he was challenge for the presidency by UEFA boss Lennart Johansson. Blatter demonstrated ruthless control of the FIFA machinery and fought allegations of financial mismanagement and corruption to beat Johansson – but not before FIFA's dirty laundry had been washed in public.

2003
FOE DEATH
Cameroon midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe suddenly collapsed in the semi-final of the Confederations Cup against Colombia in France. He lay motionless and was eventually carried off the pitch as medics attempted to resuscitate him. But it was to no avail and he died of what was believed to be a hereditary heart condition.

2004
JUVENTUS DRUGS SCANDAL
Juve's dominance of Italian and European football came into question when a court sentenced club doctor Riccardo Agricola to 22 months in prison for supplying players with performance-enhancing drugs between 1994 and 1998. The evidence uncovered 280 different types of drug. Although none were on the FIFA banned list, it was enough to cast suspicion.

2006
ROBERT HOYZER MATCH-FIXING
German referee Hoyzer was jailed for fixing matches for a betting syndicate. He first came under suspicion during a German Cup tie when, with Hamburg leading 2-0, he sent off one of their players and awarded two dubious penalties to the home side, Paderborn, who eventually won 4-2.

2006
CALCIOPOLI
In the biggest scandal ever to hit Italian football, several major clubs were accused of fixing matches through the selection of favourable referees. Milan, Fiorentina, Lazio and Reggina were all handed severe punishments, which were reduced on appeal, while Juventus were stripped of their 2005 and 2006 league titles and relegated to Serie B.

2006
WARNER'S WORLD CUP RICHES
FIFA vice-president Jack Warner came under fire, not for the first time, when Trinidad & Tobago's entire 2006 World Cup ticket allocation went to a travel agency owned by his family. Warner, his wife and two sons were all directors of a company called Simpaul who, it was revealed, were not selling individual match tickets to their nation's games in Germany, but instead offered "travel packages" that included tickets and accommodation, but no travel, at a profit of more than £1,600 per package.

2006
ZIDANE USES HIS HEAD
Having put France ahead against Italy in the World Cup Final, Zinedine Zidane head-butted Marco Materazzi after the Italian allegedly said something about Zidane's family. The incident seemed to be missed and it was only when fourth official, Luis Medina Cantalejo, notified referee Horacio Elizondo that Zidane was shown the red card.

Keir Radnedge wrote in *World Soccer* in August 2006: "After the Final an internet poll run by *L'Equipe* questioned whether Zidane's career would be for ever marred by the manner of his farewell. Only 39 per cent of French fans agreed, with 61 per cent firmly in denial. But we all know what we saw. Sadly."

> "Juventus were stripped of their 2005 and 2006 league titles and relegated to Serie B"

Off and away

2009
IVORY COAST STADIUM DISASTER
The Felix Houphouet-Boigny stadium in Abidjan had passed a FIFA safety test prior to the 2010 World Cup qualifiers, but that did not prevent 22 people dying at the game between Ivory Coast and Malawi. People trying to get in without tickets were blamed as fans were crushed against a wall. Unbelievably, the match was still played, with Ivory Coast winning 5-0.

2009
HENRY'S HAND DENIES IRISH
With the aggregate scores level at 1-1, and in the 13th minute of extra time in their 2010 World Cup qualifying play-off with the Republic of Ireland, France captain Thierry Henry used his arm and his hand to control the ball before passing to William Gallas, who scored to win a place in South Africa.

2009
NORTH AFRICAN TURMOIL
A World Cup qualifier between hosts Egypt and bitter rivals Algeria, which was followed by a play-off between the two in Sudan, saw team buses being attacked, players injured and clashes between fans – not just in Cairo and Khartoum, but also in Marseille, Paris and London.

2010
TOGO BUS ATTACK
Prior to their opening match at the African Nations Cup in Angola, the Togo team came under fire from gunmen in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda. Assistant coach Amelete Abalo and Togan press officer Stanislas Ocloo were both killed. Togo withdrew from the tournament.

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Picture courtesy of Kick4Life

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Pictures courtesy of the English Football Association and Kick4Life

HONDURAS

Carlo Costly

Slow starter now up and running for South Africa

Family footsteps...Costly seeks to emulate his father by playing in the World Cup finals

WHEN Carlo Costly steps out onto the pitches of Nelspruit, Johannesburg and Bloemfontein this summer he will be following in the footsteps of his father, Anthony Costly, who played for Honduras at the 1982 World Cup finals in Spain.

"If I can shine as my dad did in Spain, I'll be a very happy man," says the 27-year-old striker. "That Honduran side of 1982 made the nation proud and were tremendously unlucky to be eliminated in the opening round.

"My father and the other guys in the team rose to the challenge and did not let themselves be overawed by far more famous opponents. We must, and will, have the same state of mind.

"As in my dad's day, we'll concentrate on our strengths: the great spirit in the camp, the organisation coach Reinaldo Rueda has instilled in us, our potential for goals.

"My father was a great player. It's an honour to have his name. It has a lot of significance for me and will spur me on."

While defender Anthony Costly served as the alert bank-vault guard, his son only ever wanted to be a safe-cracker up front. Not surprisingly, given his lineage, he never shirks the defensive duties that all forwards have to do these days, but first and foremost he is about the gutsy pursuit of goals, many of which come courtesy of his trusty left foot.

In three years as a full international, Costly already has 14 goals to his name and, crucially, scored six times in the World Cup 2010 qualifiers, including a double in the 3-1 victory over Mexico in San Pedro Sula last year, a victory which most Hondurans regard as the turning point of the campaign.

That win over the region's top dogs tasted all the sweeter for Costly, who had lived on the southern outskirts of Mexico City for several years, moving there with his mother after her divorce from Anthony and remarriage to a Mexican.

Residing in the borough of Coyoacan – where exiled Soviet revolutionary Leon Trotsky lived until his assassination – the teen cut his footballing teeth with the junior and B teams at Celaya, Morelia, Atlas and Pumas, before heading home to Honduras and joining Platense at 23.

"I have a house in Mexico and have kept in touch with the friends from my childhood," says Costly. "Mexico is my second country, I can't deny it. But I will defend the Honduras colours against anyone."

> **"I will defend the Honduras colours against anyone"**

His excellent displays en route to South Africa stand in complete contrast to his club experiences in recent times. After moving to Polish club GKS Belchatow in 2007, a six-month loan spell at Birmingham City last year did little to enhance his reputation and on returning to Poland he fell from favour and was used exclusively as a sub this season.

With Rueda warning him he could not pick a club misfit, he called it quits in January and concluded a £500,00 move to Romanian club Vaslui.

"I'll break my back to make the best of my opportunities at Vaslui," says Costly.

"The only one who can stop me representing Honduras at the World Cup is me."

Nick Bidwell

AUSTRALIA

Harry Kewell

Injury-prone Socceroo star is fit and raring to go

COACH Pim Verbeek, not to mention a large number of Australia fans, would have been frozen to the spot on hearing in December that their star performer was once again suffering with the bane of his life: acute groin trouble.

Initial medical bulletins coming out of Galatasaray, where Kewell has played since 2008, had him facing five months on the sidelines, thus making the 31-year-old a major doubt for the World Cup finals. Thankfully, the doomsday reports were to prove wide of the mark, with a clutch of specialists in Sydney concluding that surgery was not necessary and three to four weeks of rest would clear the problem.

Cue sighs of relief all over Australia. Kewell may have his critics – most of whom cite his repeated injury woes – but, when push comes to shove, the national side are nowhere near the same force without him. No one else in the Aussie squad can match him for inventiveness or top-level experience – he has spent 15 seasons in the European mainstream with Leeds United, Liverpool and now Galatasaray – and, as the leading player of his generation down under, he is the side's talisman and the figure they rally around.

There is no question that Verbeek badly needs Kewell to be operational in South Africa. Although normally a left-flank flyer, he can also play up front if necessary – and Verbeek has been hinting that he may use him to fill the striking void left by the international retirement of Mark Viduka.

It does make perfect sense. Employing Tim Cahill as a solo front man negates his incredible ability to ghost late into goalscoring positions, while neither Celtic's Scott McDonald or Joshua Kennedy of Nagoya Grampus have looked at ease leading the Aussie line. Other possibles such as Alex Brosque and Bruce Djite are still too raw at this level. Kewell, on the other hand, would be a much better fit.

Because of Milan Baros' unavailability through injury, Kewell has spent much of this season in Turkey up front for Galatasaray and has let no one down, scoring nine goals in his first 16 league games.

"In terms of experience, Harry is the No1 contender to be our striker," says Verbeek. "He's done it before. He's done it very well. He's been impressive with Galatasaray and I've taken note.

"Of course, we know what a fantastic job he can do for us out wide, but I do have other good options in that area."

The section of the Liverpool crowd who used to barrack him for his apparent porcelain physique and an alleged lack of commitment would not recognise this new-look Kewell. Leaner and stronger than he has been for years, he has found a new lease of life in Istanbul and undoubtedly owes much of this metamorphosis to the excellent conditioning regime of his long-time personal trainer, Les Gelis.

The national side are nowhere near the same force without him

Sadly for Kewell, Gelis decided to return to his family in England at the turn of the year and now the onus is on his successor, ex-Australia rugby union physio Dave Bick, to have his client fit and firing for what surely will be his last shot at World Cup glory.

Nick Bidwell

Aussie options...Kewell could play up front or out wide in South Africa this summer

USA

Michael Bradley

Daddy's boy picked on ability alone

Fatherly advice... Bradley snr (left) selects his son on merit alone

ACCUSATIONS of nepotism and the misuse of patronage are standard procedure for any son playing in a team run by his father. So when, in 2007, USA coach Bob Bradley began to regularly select his son, Michael, in midfield, the "daddy's boy" taunts were as loud as they were virulent. But assembling a posse is no proof of guilt and, with the young Bradley slowly but surely carving out a niche for himself in international football, the hunting hordes have had to look elsewhere for their kicks.

Borussia Monchengladbach's defensive midfielder is in the national team on merit and – along with striker Landon Donovan, fellow midfielder Clint Dempsey (who is hoping to recover from a knee-ligament injury) and goalkeeper Tim Howard – the 22-year-old is rightly considered one of Team America's untouchables and absolutely vital to the overall scheme of things.

Born in Princeton where his father was coaching at the local Ivy League university, Michael definitively quashed all accusations of familial favouritism during the 2010 qualifiers, not only excelling in his primary role as the ultra-competitive enforcer, but also catching the eye with his thoughtful distribution and breaks into advanced areas, from where he helped himself to five goals.

Goals are clearly much more than a sideline for Bradley jnr. While at Dutch club Heerenveen he was on target 16 times in the 2007-08 season and underlined his box-to-box ability in last year's Confederations Cup, scoring against Egypt after bursting forward and exchanging passes with Donovan.

"I just want to do the best job I possibly can and to help the team," says Bradley, who became the youngest MLS player to be transferred abroad when he left MetroStars for Heerenveen in January 2006. "I'm there to anchor the midfield, to screen the defence, but I can't afford to be one-dimensional either. I look to attack at the right moments and bring my share of goals to the table."

"I'm there to anchor midfield but I can't afford to be one-dimensional"

Although not the fastest, he derives his effectiveness from other sources; namely his work ethic, versatility and capacity for quick thinking. While his two-year spell with Heerenveen undoubtedly did him the world of good, he had a firm grasp of the game's fundamentals even before arriving in Europe.

And how could it have been otherwise with a coach for a father? As Bob Bradley was taking charge at Princeton University, Chicago Fire and MetroStars, his progeny was soaking up the experience.

All the coaches who have worked with Michael paint a picture of a player obsessed with working on his weaknesses. Now he must sort out his temper.

At last year's Confederations Cup, a red card in the semi-final with Spain, followed by an altercation in the tunnel with referee Jorge Larrionda, resulted in a four-match ban. Any repeat in South Africa really would be disastrous for all concerned.

Nick Bidwell

World Cup trip too expensive?

ULTIMATE BUDGET ACCOMMODATION OPTION FOR THE WORLD CUP EXPERIENCE

By **PETER MURISON SOUTH AFRICA**
Cape Town

With the 2010 FIFA World Cup quickly approaching, fans and tourists from around the world are looking for the best accommodation option available in South Africa during June and July.

Of course though demand is high at the moment – hotels, hostels and B&Bs are all quickly filling up and continuing to raise their prices with an increasing number of people wanting to head to the Republic and support their team.

There has been a major lack of budget accommodation of late and thankfully though for fans there is one genuine alternative. The world's only nomadic festival hostel, 'Hostival' is set to make its mark at the football extravaganza.

Owned, run and inspired by Giuliano Giacovazzi,'Hostival' has built its reputation off the back of successful setups at such as Oktoberfest, the Rio Carnival and the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona.

> "We're on the doorstep of stadiums, official fan parks and all the top spots to go out."

We're on the doorstep of stadiums, official fan parks and all the top spots to go out. We've built our reputation on giving people what they want, where they want it and when they want it! - it's going to be an amazing month!"

A born-and-bred South African, Giuliano has travelled around the work and, along with his teams around the country, genuinely understands the security concerns possible tourists have about heading to South Africa. Looking to put these at ease, 'Hostival' have pre-arranged bus services as well as a team of ex-military men who are tasked with designing the ultimate 24-hour security system.

The buses will take fans both to and from the Stadiums and specially designed 'Hostival' after parties, as well as offering a regular airport shuttle service - Making sure every fan still has enough money in their pocket for the much needed celebrations!Using local schools as a base, 'Hostival' hostels offer the cheapest and most convenient form of accommodation for the traveling supporter groups or fan parties and are setup in most of the host cities.

"It's about making a relaxed and safe environment for everyone to enjoy a party," says Giuliano.

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FELIPE

UDINESE TO FIORENTINA

FIORENTINA general manager Pantaleo Corvini is not a man to be easily discouraged. Having had a £12million bid for the 25-year-old centre-back turned down in the summer, he tried his luck again in January – and got the Brazilian on loan, with an option to buy at the end of the season.

With Felipe out of favour at Udinese – and rumoured to be at loggerheads with club coach Pasquale Marino (who was fired just before Christmas, only to take charge once again in February) – Corvini sensed the time was right for another enquiry.

A mixture of aerial power, ruthlessness and elegance, coupled with the ability to predict an opposition's next move, Felipe joined Udinese at the age of 16 and has seven years of top-flight Italian football under his belt. Thanks to a part-Venetian family tree, an Italian wife and a decade of residency, he has also been making noises about playing for the *Azzurri*, claiming: "I was born in Brazil but have grown up football-wise – and as a person – in Italy."

JOAO PEREIRA

SPORTING BRAGA TO SPORTING LISBON

THE Estadio Jose Alvalade will be a far lively place following the mid-winter signing of this feisty right-back from surprise Portuguese title-chasers Braga.

A midfielder turned defender, Joao Pereira is dynamic and purposeful, never less than totally committed and has every chance of finding himself in the World Cup plans of Portugal coach Carlos Queiroz. But nobody's perfect, least of all Joao Pereira. The phrase "short fuse" could have been invented for the 26-year-old and rare is a match day when he stays out of trouble.

His arrival on a four-and-a-half year contract at Sporting Lisbon should make for interesting viewing. As a former youth-team graduate and professional with cross-town rivals Benfica, he used to enjoy getting under the skin of green-and-white-hooped fans.

"I'll fight to the death for us to win," declared Joao Pereira at his first press conference after signing. Let's hope, he doesn't mean it literally.

Colin KAZIM-RICHARDS

FENERBAHCE TO TOULOUSE

AFTER three-and-a-half seasons in Istanbul, where he went by the Ottoman pseudonym of Kazim-Kazim, the London-born Turkey international has opted for a change of continent, swopping the Asian side of the Bosphorus for six-months in France.

Under-performing Toulouse, who have an option to sign him permanently if all goes well after his loan spell, see the quick and forceful 23-year-old as the ideal foil for star striker Andre-Pierre Gignac. However, it's not a deal without its risks. Kazim-Richards can be infuriatingly inconsistent and for every high-octane display – such as in Turkey's Euro 2008 semi-final loss to Germany and when helping Fenerbahce reach the last eight of the 2007-08 Champions League – there is a corresponding low.

Certainly the French media seem to enjoy having him around, endlessly retelling stories about his dark side, including his alleged involvement in sex orgies in Turkey, various misdemeanours behind the wheel and a collection of pit bulls and Rottweilers.

TRANSFERS

Nick Bidwell picks some of the best deals in the January transfer window

Dejan LOVREN

DINAMO ZAGREB TO LYON

WHILE Lyon's uncompromising coach Claude Puel caused quite a stir earlier this year by vetoing a proposal from the boardroom to bring in Patrick Vieira, he had no such reservations about club president Jean-Michel Aulas splashing out £6.98million on this young and relatively inexperienced Dinamo Zagreb and Croatia stopper.

The consensus of opinion in France is that Lyon have paid substantially over the odds for someone who only has two full caps and is cup-tied in the Champions League. The Lyonnais, however, think otherwise. They are enamoured with Lovren's speed, discipline, strength in the air and versatility – he also can play right-back or as a holding midfielder – and point out Premier League sides Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur were also keen.

Lyon could certainly do with some extra steel at the heart of a back four which has been hampered for much of the season by the fading form of Cris and Jean-Alain Boumsong. Meanwhile Dinamo Zagreb president Damir Vrbanovic says: "We've lost one of the most sought-after players in Europe and the pearl of our football."

McDonald MARIGA

PARMA TO INTERNAZIONALE

DON'T mention bureaucracy UK-style to the young Kenya defensive midfielder. On the verge of completing a January move from Parma to on-the-up Manchester City, the 22-year-old had it all snatched away when his move was declared null and void after the Home Office refused him a work permit.

The subject of rave reviews ever since joining Parma from Swedish side Helsingborg in 2007, Mariga did not have to wait long for another big-time bus to come along, however, joining perennial Italian standard-bearers Inter on transfer deadline day. But the young man must have been bemused, if not downright furious, with the way he was treated by British officialdom.

Despite fulfilling the criteria for a work permit – appearing in 75 per cent of his country's full internationals over the past two years – he was undone by the small print which states players have to come from one of FIFA's top 70 countries. Kenya, unfortunately, rank only 98th and even the intervention of the East African nation's prime minister, Raila Odinga, was not enough to cut through the administrative logjam.

REVER

GREMIO TO WOLFSBURG

IN a season when they have lost all semblance of defensive stability – to the point where only bottom club Hertha Berlin had let in more goals prior to the Bundesliga's winter break – reigning champions Wolfsburg simply had to seek a remedy in January and are convinced they will be less of a soft touch now that Brazil-born centre-back Rever has arrived in a £4.3million deal from Gremio of Porto Alegre.

Signed even though he had a broken right hand and would have to wait a while to make his debut, the giant 25-year-old should prove an outstanding acquisition. Last year he was voted the second-best stopper in the Brazilian league and – over-endowed with physicality, height and street-wise instincts – he looks well-suited to the combative German game.

Nor will he be stepping into the unknown culturally as the parents of his wife live in the country and his partner speaks the language.

Poor Gremio. Not only have they lost a key player, they also had to use much of the transfer fee received to pay off a long-standing debt to ex-director Teodoro Pedrotti.

Amr Zaki

I thought a lot about it [a rumoured move to Real Madrid or Liverpool]. It was a mistake. I've learnt. That will never happen again

Amr Zaki

Egypt's controversial striker on Steve Bruce, Algeria and Jewish footballers

Putting the record **straight**

You're back in the Premier League after falling out with Wigan Athletic last season. How did the move to Hull City come about?
I've been working since last May trying to get a move back to England. It was really hard. I was waiting for a summer transfer, that didn't work, and then in October a lot of clubs were interested. There were two left and I decided on Hull because they needed a striker and I felt from the manager that I would get the chance to play.

Did you think the Premier League was easy after starting last season so well for Wigan?
It is not easy but I had someone like Steve [Bruce, then manager of Wigan] who gave me the confidence to play. I really wanted to do something special for Wigan because the fans gave me such support.

You scored 10 goals before Christmas and suddenly Real Madrid and Liverpool were rumoured to be interested. But then you fell out with Bruce and were sent back to Egypt. What happened exactly?
I had come from Egypt and started scoring goals straight away. I thought a lot about those other clubs and the press. That took a lot of concentration. It was a mistake, I've learnt. That will never happen again. If you hear Real Madrid or Liverpool want you, you know it will be a good move and you think a lot about it. Steve was telling the press: "Let him concentrate." And that was the main point between me and Steve. He didn't think I was concentrating, and he was the one who brought me here, so he was a little, let's say, jealous about it. It was also a lack of experience [on my part]. When I went to Egypt I stayed for four or five days more than I should and Wigan didn't find this acceptable. I'm used to it in Egypt, it's not a big problem. Here it is different. It was a big mistake by me.

How do you view your former manager now?
I can never disrespect Steve Bruce because he brought me to England and let me play in the Premier League. Without Steve or Wigan I would not play in the Premier League. I am looking forward to the next game against him to show I'm a good striker. We play Sunderland on April 24. I will score.

Was it difficult being sent back to Zamalek, after being coveted by Liverpool and Real Madrid?
When I went back to Egypt I couldn't adapt. It's like a Turkish or Dutch player doing the same. When you play in the best league and play against the best players, and suddenly you fall back to where you began.

You played in the World Cup qualifier against Algeria in Cairo, when you needed to win 3-0 to reach South Africa [Egypt won 2-0]. What was the build-up to that crucial game like?
We were taken to a hotel far out of town so that we were isolated and could prepare. We weren't allowed to talk to the press or anything, so it was quite calm. But then you got to the pitch. The atmosphere, the players, the staff, the fans, the spirit; everyone was together. We just wanted to go to the World Cup because Egypt, as a team, deserve to go there. We were nervous before the game, maybe that's why we didn't score more goals.

Did the president talk to you before the game?
Yes, two days before the game he visited us and said: "This is a game of football. Do your best, if you win or lose. If you lose, there's nothing to be ashamed of. Just do your best, and play with spirit."

And what was the atmosphere like in the stadium?
Of course it was an experience. We didn't have any option but to win. There was only one thing in the country: the game. And when we scored the first goal it was a good step to qualification. But the negative was that we felt we had won already. We then went to Sudan [the World Cup play-off was played in a neutral venue, where Algeria won 1-0] and everyone was too relaxed thinking we had qualified already.

Algeria's team bus was stoned in Cairo, but the press said they made it up. What did you think?
It's always like this between the countries, so we knew what to expect. They have qualified and that is the end of it. I don't want to talk about politics.

It was reported you wouldn't sign for Portsmouth as there were Algerians and Israelis playing for them. Is that true?
After the game it was really frustrating what happened. I knew a lot of children and women who were there [in Sudan] who were threatened by Algerians. It had nothing to do with football. I had to calm down before I spoke to the press. But there are Algerians playing for Hull City, [striker Kamel] Ghilas, so I have no problem. Also after the African Nations Cup when we won [Egypt beat Algeria 4-0 in the semi-finals] there was no trouble after the game.

And what about Avram Grant at Portsmouth?
No, I don't take a decision based on these things. I played at Wigan with [Daniel] De Ridder. His mother was Jewish. If Portsmouth had enough money, and were in a better position, I'd move there, no problem!

Do you think Africa's best team will be absent from South Africa?
Well, when we played against Chelsea, Didier Drogba said to me: "It is sad, you have the best team in Africa. It's a shame."

Will you be supporting Algeria at the World Cup, given they are the only Arab team at the finals?
[Laughs] No, I will go for England.

Egypt travelled to England for a friendly in March. Did you do some spying for your coach?
There was no need to say anything because all the Egyptian players watch the Premier League so they knew everybody there.

Egypt are ranked 10th in the world by FIFA, so why do so few Egyptians come to Europe?
We have two main problems. You want to be going when you're 21, but they [the clubs] let you go only after you make trouble to leave at 26 or 27. The clubs in Egypt also ask for a lot of money, which stops young players from getting opportunities abroad. The more that we play abroad, the easier it will be for us to qualify for the World Cup.

What do you want to achieve this season?
The first target is to not go back to Egypt. The second is to show the Hull fans I deserve to be here.

Interview by James Montague

Second chance...Zaki is on loan at Hull until June

HOLLAND

Gregory VAN DER WIEL

Back to where he started from

DUTCH FOOTBALL has Marco Van Basten to thank for Gregory Van der Wiel's progress over the past year.

Two years ago, after taking over as coach of Ajax, Van Basten took one look at the central defender and concluded that he was a square peg in a round hole; not sufficiently tall or physically imposing to hit the heights in the middle, but with all the necessary pace and technical qualities to be a thoroughbred attacking full-back.

Van Basten may not have proved a success at the Ajax helm – he was only in charge for one season – but at least he made a difference to Van der Wiel, turning him from a stopper of limited horizons into an overlapping sensation who is a right-back with pretensions of owning the entire flank.

It comes as no surprise to learn that the 22-year-old is a big fan of Barcelona's barnstorming Brazilian right-back Daniel Alves and the pair have an identical mindset in always looking to cram as much adventure into 90 minutes as possible.

A player with Van der Wiel's ability to energise a crowd should not have an image problem.

Yet, rightly or wrongly, his tattoos, baggy pants, baseball cap and love of gangster rap have fuelled a bad-boy reputation, and some people have still not forgiven him for events seven years ago, when he was thrown out of the Ajax academy for insubordination.

But Van der Wiel insists that the red card shown to him by Ajax, and subsequent three years with Haarlem, was a wake-up call.

"I realised I was wasting my talent," he admits. "The second-hand jerseys and bad facilities weren't nice.

"I concentrated on my game and eventually I was wanted again. Ajax, PSV and Feyenoord made me offers and I chose Ajax on the basis that I had unfinished business with them.

"Not revenge. Just the need to make things right."

Trouble does seem to follow him around, though, and the perfect example was the "Twitter affair" which erupted last autumn. After concussion forced him to withdraw from the Holland squad travelling to play in Australia, he opted to attend a Lil Wayne concert, even posting a photo of himself with the rapper on his Twitter page. Needless to say, Holland boss Bert Van Maarwijk was not pleased.

Luckily for Van der Wiel, Van Maarwijk has since said the incident will not affect the full-back's future with the national team.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Ajax
Country Holland
Born February 3, 1988, in Amsterdam
Previous clubs Ajax, Haarlem
International debut February 2009 v Tunisia
International caps 7 (0 goals)

Celso ORTIZ

South American who's gone Dutch

IN A SEASON of non-stop disappointment for the reigning Dutch champions AZ – the short-lived reign of coach Ronald Koeman, an early elimination from the Champions League, sponsors DSB bank going bankrupt – the Alkmaar outfit will be hoping for better in 2010.

And one reason for fans to start believing again could be the mid-term arrival of this highly-rated Paraguay Under-20 midfielder.

Bought from the popular Asuncion club Cerro Porteno, where he had been since the age of nine, Ortiz has been sprinkled with more than enough stardust to make good in Europe. Able to play in a conventional holding role or driving forward on the left, his passion is there for all to see.

A point of reference in a Cerro Porteno side that won the 2009 Paraguayan apertura title and reached the semi-finals of the Sudamericana Cup, Ortiz is tactically aware, assured on the ball and makes things happen. Able to dictate the tempo of the game with his passing, he is an incisive counter-attacker who boasts a rip-roaring left-footed shot, particularly from free-kicks.

The 21-year-old's decision to quit his homeland raised a few eyebrows in Paraguay, but not those of Cerro Porteno coach Pedro Troglio, the former Argentina World Cup midfielder, who believes: "If determination and footballing class have anything to do with it, Celso will do well on the European circuit. This is his moment."

Nick Bidwell

PARAGUAY

FACT FILE

Club AZ (Hol)
Country Paraguay
Born January 26, 1989, in Asuncion
Previous club Cerro Porteno
Honours Paraguayan apertura 2009

Adam SZALAI

From Real reserves to the Bundesliga

HUNGARY

FACT FILE

Club Mainz (Ger)
Country Hungary
Born December 9, 1987 in Budapest
Previous clubs Stuttgart (Ger), Real Madrid (Spa)
International debut February 2009 v Israel
International caps 1 (0 goals)

PERSISTENCE was the key to German club Mainz landing Hungarian striker Adama Szalai, who was top scorer for Real Madrid's B team last season with 16 goals.

After failing in an attempt to sign him last summer, Mainz director of sport Christian Heidel returned to the Spanish capital in January for another try – and this time he made all the right moves, securing an agreement to bring in the 22-year-old on a six-month loan, with an option to make the deal permanent with, apparently, a £1.5 million fee sufficing.

It's little wonder that some have described Mainz's swoop for Szalai as a heist. The considerably more prestigious Borussia Dortmund, who reportedly were prepared to offer Real £2m for the forward, should have been over the hills and far way. But, in their young coach Thomas Tuchel, Mainz crucially had the inside track on their rivals.

A few years previously, the 36-year-old had worked with Szalai in the Stuttgart youth team and the pair had remained in contact.

Although he never made the Real first team, Szalai does not deserve to be filed in the cast-off category. Real rated him so highly that they paid Stuttgart £750,00 for him back in 2007 and he is already a full international.

Able to play in any number of positions – lone front runner, second striker, in the hole – he knows where the goal is and, even though he stands 6ft 4in, he has the technical ability to play himself out of the tightest corners.

What he really needs though is some stability and an end to the frequent-flyer programme which has taken him from the academies of top Budapest sides Honved and Ujpest Dosza to Stuttgart's juniors, Real Madrid's second-string and now Mainz. Putting down some roots would do him the world of good but, in the post-Bosman era, that may be asking too much.

Nick Bidwell

GERMANY

Mats HUMMELS

Another one that got away from Bayern

AN EXIT VISA from Bayern Munich need not be the beginning of the end for the rejected. Zvjezdan Misimovic (Wolfsburg), Piotr Trochowski (Hamburg) and Toni Kroos (excelling on loan this season at title-chasing Bayer Leverkusen) have all prospered away from the Bavarian womb – and the same can also be said of 21-year-old Mats Hummels, who since joining Borussia Dortmund two years ago has matured into one of the best centre-backs in the country.

Uncapped at senior level, he may not have featured in the 30-strong list of players summoned by Germany coach Joachim Low for pre-World Cup medical checks, but it must have been a close call. Positionally outstanding, quick, unflustered and never embarrassed when asked to use the ball constructively, whether he makes it to South Africa or not, his long-term international future simply cannot be in question.

"I'm totally relaxed about a possible call-up to the national team," says Hummels. "It takes time and I'm not in any hurry. I'm not going to become stressed because it doesn't happen straight away. I'm only concentrating on my effectiveness for Dortmund. Everything else is irrelevant."

What distinguishes him from the central defensive herd is he is much more than a blood-and-guts destroyer. His energy, good distribution and appreciation of the tactical angles have often been employed deep in midfield – the position he occupied as Germany beat England in the Final of the European Under-21 Championship last year – and, as he proved recently with two goals in Dortmund's 3-2 win in Koln, he can be quite a threat at set-pieces too.

How Bayern must regret their decision to let him go, first sending him out on loan to Dortmund in January 2008, then, a year later, agreeing to sell him for £4million. Bayern like to think of themselves as shrewder than the average Bundesliga club. Not in this case, though.

"I was confident one day Mats would turn out to be a super professional," admits former Bayern youth coach Hermann Gerland, who these days is assistant to current head coach Louis Van Gaal.

"We should never have given him up."

The fact that Hummels played just once in the Bayern first team is all the stranger as he was one of their own. His father, Hermann, is a long-time coach of the club's juniors and son Mats had been on the club's books since the age of seven, starting out as a gung-ho attacker.

It's the same old problem for Bayern: with the pressure on to deliver results, patiently waiting for young talent to ripen is a luxury they cannot always afford.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Borussia Dortmund
Country Germany
Born December 16, 1988, in Bergisch Gladbach
Previous club Bayern Munich
Honours 2009 European Under-21 Championship

FIVE TO FOLLOW

Eric Weil profiles five teenage talents in Argentina's Primera Division

Club/Country River Plate/Argentina
Born July 6, 1992
Position Forward

Daniel VILLALVA

PLAYED for Argentina at last year's Under-17 World Championship – where scouts from both Madrid clubs, Chelsea, Manchester United and Roma all showed interest, only for him to say he wants to stay and win a title with River Plate, who he joined at the age of 11.

Made his Primera debut in February 2009 at 16 while only being paid expenses of £135 a month. However, because of the number of first-team games he was playing, league rules meant the club had to give him a professional contract. Known as "Keko", he was named Daniel after River's current president, Daniel Passarella.

Club/Country Banfield/Colombia
Born July 12, 1991
Position Midfield

James RODRIGUEZ

BORN in Cucuta, Colombia, he rose through Banfield's junior divisions to make his Primera debut in last year's clausura.

Tall and strong, the 18-year-old attacking midfielder or winger was one of the key players for his club in this season's apertura but was curiously overlooked by his homeland for their Under-20 team at last year's South American Championship.

Club/Country River Plate/Argentina
Born May 3, 1991
Position Forward

Gabriel FUNES MORI

HIT the headlines in a summer tournament match against River's eternal rivals Boca Juniors, after which he signed his first contract with the club.

Since then he has featured mostly as a substitute in River's poor start to the year.

His twin, Ramon, plays in the reserves for River.

Club/Country River Plate/Argentina
Born March 4, 1992
Position Forward

Erik LAMELA

BARCELONA tried to sign Lamela when he was 12, but River fought a lengthy tug of war which they eventually won by offering him free education at the club's school and his parents a big percentage of any future transfer fee.

A regular in the reserve side, he made his first-team debut last June, but he must learn to control a temper which has already earned him several red cards in his short career.

Club/Country Boca Juniors/Argentina
Born Feb 23, 1988
Position Midfield

Nicolas GAITAN

BOCA youth-team product who was the subject of a £650,000 bid by Almeria when he won the reserves' championship in 2008.

Since his first-team debut last year has played more than 50 games, becoming a key figure – a fact recognised by Diego Maradona who gave him his debut for the national team.

Boca say they have an offer of £9million from Ajax to free him from his contract.

SOFIA The clubs, the history, what to see, how to get there

A Balkan

Peterjon Cresswell takes a tour of a city that was founded over 7,000 years ago and remains a fascinating mixture of culture, chaos and sporting rivalry

THE BULGARIAN capital dominates the domestic game, with the league title having left the city just14 times since its inception in 1923. Yet despite being home to four top-flight teams, it is the big two of CSKA and Levski – with almost 60 championships between them – who hold all the power in Sofia, with their fierce "Eternal Derby" having been marked over the years by controversy, corruption – and some classic players.

Formed by high-school students in 1911, Sport Club Levski – who were named after a Bulgarian freedom fighter, Vasil Levski – were not registered until 1914. The first Bulgarian club to turn semi-professional, they won the first of their 26 league titles in 1933 and soon became one of the most popular sides in the country. However, it wasn't until 1948 that they acquired a serious rival.

Formed from an array of mergers, CSKA (Central Sport Club of the Army) beat Levski for the first time shortly after their foundation, with a last-minute goal from Nako Chakmakov sealing a 3-1 win and setting the tone for the next 60 years.

The army side were soon winning

National pride...Bulgaria (in white) take on Republic of Ireland at the Vasil Levski Stadium

delight

THE STADIUMS

1 BULGARIAN ARMY STADIUM
CSKA's home ground was opened in 1923 and holds 22,000. However, in February 2010 it was announced that the current stadium would be knocked down and a new 30,000-capacity arena built on the same site.

2 OVCHA KUPEL STADIUM
Slavia's 32,000-capacity home also hosts Bulgaria Under-21 games.

3 LOKOMOTIV STADIUM
Lokomotiv Sofia's ground was opened in 1985 and holds 22,000 following renovation in 2000, which allows it to stage rock concerts as well.

4 GEORGI ASPARUHOV STADIUM
Levski's stadium was completed in 1963, renamed after the club's tragic hero in 1990 and rebuilt as a 29,000 all-seater arena in 1999.

5 VASIL LEVSKI STADIUM
The national stadium was officially opened in 1953, reconstructed in 1966 and 2002, and now holds 43,600. It hosts Bulgaria internationals and was used as the home venue for Levski's Champions League games in 2006.

almost everything going, with their record nine-in-a-row title wins in the 1950s demonstrating their favoured status in the newly-founded Communist system.

Meanwhile, the more populist Blues of Levski had to be content with popping up to claim the occasional trophy. However, matters changed in the 1960s when Levski – who were delighted to have dropped the "Dinamo" tag temporarily forced upon them by the authorities – nurtured a number of quality youngsters.

The best of the crop was Georgi "Gundi" Asparuhov, a talented striker who died in a car crash shortly after a title-clinching derby game and just before the Soviet Army Cup Final of 1971. He had previously been denied a dream transfer to Benfica when the government vetoed the move.

Another generation of Levski graduates – Bozhidar Iskrenov, Emil Spasov and Nikolay Iliev – helped the club win a rare domestic treble in 1984, before they clashed with a CSKA side containing Georgi Dimitrov and Plamen Markov, plus a 19-year-old Hristo Stoichkov, the following year.

Hostility on and off the pitch between the two clubs had been growing over the years and reached their climax in June 1985 during the Bulgarian Cup Final. After fighting broke out between the teams, six players – including Stoichkov – were banned for life and both clubs were forced to disband.

The two sides did carry on, however, as Sredets (CSKA) and Vitosha (Levski), until things returned to the Bulgarian version of normality following the political changes of 1989.

Derby duel...CSKA's Brazilian striker Marquinhos (left) clashes with Darko Tasevski of Levski

Gut feeling...no disputing who this fan supports

by which time the players' sentences had been quashed and Stoichkov was a Barcelona player.

As the political climate changed, so did the fortunes of CSKA. Without the support of the military their dominance waned and Levski started to win trophies once again. In 2006, Levski became the first Bulgarian club to reach the group stage of the Champions League.

Lesser city rivals Slavia and Lokomotiv Sofia were both formed in the pre-war era and each has a trophy cabinet brimming with exotic honours – Soviet Army Cup, Ulpia Serdika Cup, European Championship of Railwaymen, Balkans Cup – that hints at the obscure nature of this bizarre, but nonetheless passionate, branch of the European game.

Slavia were founded in 1913 in a cafe in downtown Sofia and won the last of their seven league titles in 1996 – the year in which they did the double after Levski president Thomas Slavchis ordered his team from the pitch before the end of the Bulgarian Cup Final.

Lokomotiv in northern Sofia have been equally sporadic in their triumphs, winning the last of their four titles in 1978, though they did reach the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup in 1980.

The city's two other title-winning clubs – AS23 and Sportklub Sofia – have both folded. ●

SOFIA SURVIVAL GUIDE

Full of east European promise

● TRANSPORT
Sofia International Airport is six miles from the city centre, connected by buses 84 and 284. City trams and trolleybuses also form part of the same network. There is also a two-line metro system. A taxi from the airport should cost around Lv15-20 (€7.50-€10).

● INFORMATION & HOTELS
The National Tourist Information Centre (Sveta Nedelya 1, +359 2 933 58 45, www.bulgariatravel.org) is closed at weekends. For fabulous comfort try The Hotel Latinka (Latinka 28A, +359 2 870 08 48, www.hotel-latinka-sofia.com, €75) which is walking distance from the Vasil Levski Stadium, while Madrid (Dragovitsa 12, +359 2 944 89 52, www.madridbg.com, €30) is simple and clean.

● EATING & DRINKING
Bulgarian cuisine is heavily reliant on skewered grilled meats, slow-cooked stews and fresh salads. The local red wine is cheap and Bulgarian beer includes Astika and Zagorka. JJ Murphy's (Karnigradska 6, +359 2 980 28 70) and the Irish Harp (Sveta Sofia 7, +359 2 989 92 28) both show football on a big screen. After hours, try a club such as Chervilo (Tsar Osvoboditel 9, +359 2 981 66 33, www.chervilo.com).

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT
At the town's centre, the ornate Aleksandar Nevski Memorial Church is the largest Orthodox church in the region and Sofia's prime attraction.

● MATCH DAY
In all cases, match tickets can be bought on the day. The national Vasil Levski Stadium and CSKA's Bulgarian Army Stadium are both south-east of the city centre. Take the 84 bus from the airport, trams 2, 12, 14 or 19, or walk from town. Levski's Georgi Asparuhov ground is by Istok bus station and can be reached by bus 120. Slavia's Ovcha Kupel is accessed by trams 4, 5, 11 or 19. Lokomotiv Sofia's ground is served by the 11 and 12 trams.

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

● Lokomotiv Stadium
Apr 3 Lokomotiv Sofia v Sliven
Apr 15 Lokomotiv Sofia v Minyor
Apr 21 Lokomotiv Sofia v Slavia
Apr 25 Lokomotiv Sofia v Cherno More

● Ovcha Kupel Stadium
Apr 4 Slavia v Botev
Apr 14 Slavia v Lovech
Apr 17 Slavia v Cherno More
Apr 24 Slavia v CSKA

● Bulgarian Army Stadium
Apr 4 CSKA v Montana
Apr 15 CSKA v Botev
Apr 21 CSKA v Lovech

● Georgi Asparuhov Stadium
Apr 10 Levski v Lokomotiv Plovdiv
Apr 17 Levski v Sportist
Apr 24 Levski v Pirin

(always check fixtures before travelling)

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Over and out

Salzburg's Somen Tchoyi manages to get past Mohamed Sarr of Standard Liege but it's the end of the line for his side's progress in the Europa League as a 0-0 draw in their home leg meant the Austrian side went out 3-2 on aggregate. More information, page 98.

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Two jobs... Minasyan

ALGERIA
Irish warm-up
England's World Cup group opponents will play the Republic of Ireland in Dublin on May 29 as part of their preparations for South Africa.

ARMENIA
Doubling up
Pyunik Yerevan coach Vardan Minasyan has agreed to combine his day job with taking charge of the national side. The 36-year-old, who won eight Armenian league titles as a player and captained his country, has been given a contract until the end of the Euro 2012 qualifiers.

AUSTRALIA
Qatar ticket booked
The Socceroos, who secured their place at the 2011 Asian Cup finals with a 1-0 win over Indonesia, will play fellow World Cup finalists New Zealand in a pre-South Africa friendly at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on May 24.

BANGLADESH
Winning coach quits
Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic, who only arrived as national team coach in January, quit on the eve of the AFC Cup, having guided the team to victory in the South Asian Games.

"He [Djordjevic] wanted a four-year contract but we can't get such a large amount of money," said Bangladesh FA president Kazi Salahuddin.

CHINA
East Asian champions
China recorded their first-ever victory over defending

RESULTS

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Q (in tables) = qualified for the finals

Group A
Mar 3 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 0
Yemen 0
Att: 1,212. **Ref:** Vo Minh Tri (Vie)

Mar 3 - Toyota
Japan 2 (Okazaki 36, Honda 90)
Bahrain 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,042. **Ref:** Abdul Bashir (Sin)
Japan: Narazaki - Tulio Tanaka, Uchida, Nakazawa, Nagatomo, Endo, Matsui (Mu Inoto 67), S Nakamura (Tamada 87), Kisebe, Honda, Okazaki.

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (Q)	6	5	0	1	17	4	15
Bahrain (Q)	6	4	0	2	12	6	12
Yemen	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Hong Kong	6	0	1	5	1	18	1

Group B
Mar 3 – Brisbane
Australia 1 (Milligan 42)
Indonesia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,422. **Ref:** Ogiya (Jap)
Australia: Galekovic - Milligan, Cole (M Thompson 72), Jamieson, Culina, Stergovski (McKay 46), Burns (Williams 86), Colosimo, Uar, Wilkshire, Kennedy.

Mar 3 - Muscat
Oman 0
Kuwait 0
Att: 27,000. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Australia (Q)	6	3	2	1	6	4	11
Kuwait (Q)	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Oman	6	2	2	2	4	4	8
Indonesia	6	0	3	3	3	6	3

Group C
Mar 3 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 0
United Arab Emirates 1 (Bangash 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Shamsuzzaman (Ban)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UAE (Q)	4	3	0	1	7	1	9
Uzbekistan (Q)	4	3	0	1	7	3	9
Malaysia	4	0	0	4	2	12	0

Group D
Mar 3 - Aleppo
Syria 4 (Al Zeno 4, Al Agha 16, J Al Hussain 47, A Al Hussain 60)
Lebanon 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Kim (SKo)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP D – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Syria (Q)	6	4	2	0	10	2	14
China (Q)	6	4	1	1	13	5	13
Vietnam	6	1	2	3	6	11	5
Lebanon	6	0	1	5	2	13	1

Group E
Mar 3 - Tehran
Iran 1 (Nekounam 90)
Thailand 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Baliden (Qat)
Iran: Rahmati - Hosseini, Aghili, K Heydari, Teymourian, Nekounam, Karimi, Madanchi (Zandipour 84), Shojaei (Ansarifard 63), Hajsafy, Khalatbary (G Rezaei 73).

Mar 3 - Amman
Jordan 2 (Al Safty 9, Bani Yaseen 60)
Singapore 1 (Noh Alam Shah 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Abdulrahman (Qat)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP E – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	2	13
Jordan (Q)	6	2	2	2	4	4	8
Thailand	6	1	3	2	3	3	6
Singapore	6	2	0	4	6	15	6

Top two in each group qualify for the 16-team finals. To be played in 2011. Hosts Qatar qualify automatically, as do the best three sides from the 2007 Asian Cup finals – winners Iraq, runners-up Saudi Arabia and third-placed South Korea – and the winners of the AFC Challenge Cup in 2008 (India) and 2010 (North Korea)

AFC CHALLENGE CUP FINALS

In Colombo, Sri Lanka

Group A
Feb 16
Tajikistan 1 (Rabiev 70)
Bangladesh 2 (Enamul 68, Meshu 74)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Matsuo (Jap)
Sent off: Cheriev (Tajikistan) 79min

Feb 16
Myanmar 4 (Kyaw Thi-ha 40, Yan Paing 69, Pai Son 81, Myo Min-tun 87)
Sri Lanka 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Faghani (Iri)
Sent off: Raheem (Sri Lanka) 17min

Feb 18
Sri Lanka 1 (Dalpethado 78)
Tajikistan 3 (Rabimov pen 14, Fatkhullaev 32, 89)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Tan (Chn)

Feb 18
Bangladesh 1 (Hossain 47)
Myanmar 2 (Tun Tun-win 16, Pai Soe 32)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Abdullah (Yem)

Feb 20
Tajikistan 3 (Rabimov 14, Khakimov 53, Rabiev 86)
Myanmar 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhr)

Feb 20
Sri Lanka 3 (Kaiz 7, Gunarathna 38, Sanjeev 80)
Bangladesh 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 600. **Ref:** Mahapab (Tha)
Sent off: Amirul (Bangladesh) 37min

AFC CHALLENGE CUP – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tajikistan	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Myanmar	3	2	0	1	6	4	6
Sri Lanka	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
Bangladesh	3	1	0	2	3	6	3

Group B
Feb 17
India U-23 1 (Franco pen 58)
Kyrgyzstan 2 (Amirov 15, Zemlianukin 32)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhr)
Sent off: Bokeev (Kyrgyzstan) 47min

Feb 17
North Korea 1 (Ryang Yong-gi 51)
Turkmenistan 1 (Karadanov 37)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 400. **Ref:** Mahapab (Tha)
Sent off: B Berdiyev (Turkmenistan) 80min

Feb 19
Kyrgyzstan 0
North Korea 4 (Pak Song-chol 29, Pak Kwang-ryong 46, Choe Myong-ho 60, Ri Chol-myong 63)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** El Haddad (Leb)

Feb 19
Turkmenistan 1 (Karadanov pen 22)
India U-23 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 450. **Ref:** Matsuo (Jap)
Sent off: Debabrata (India) 77min

Feb 21
India U-23 0
North Korea 3 (Ryang Yong-gi 36, 67, Choe Chol-man 57)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Tan (Chn)
Sent off: C S Singh (India) 82min

Feb 21
Turkmenistan 1 (Nurmuradov 70)
Kyrgyzstan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** El Haddad (Leb)

AFC CHALLENGE CUP – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
North Korea	3	2	1	0	8	1	7
Turkmenistan	3	2	1	0	3	1	7
Kyrgyzstan	3	1	0	2	2	6	3
India U-23	3	0	0	3	1	6	0

Semi-finals
Feb 24
Tajikistan 0
Turkmenistan 2 (Amanov 34, Urazov 42)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Faghani (Iri)
Tajikistan: Tsychlev - Ergashev, Radzhabov, Sanankulov, Cheriev, Rabimov, Makhmudov, Fatkhullaev (Nurullaev 71), Khakimov, Muhidinov (Vasiev 81), Rabiev (Tukhtasunov 76).
Turkmenistan: B Berdiyev - Annageldiyev, O Berdiyev (Sarkisov 52), Nurmuradov, Meredov, Cholliyev, Muhammedov (Rejepov 70), Allanazarov, Urazov, Karadanov (Shamuradov 76), Amanov.

Feb 24
North Korea 5 (Choe Myong-ho 6, Choe Chol-man 12, 73, Pak Song-chol 13, Kim Song-yong 85)
Myanmar 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 400. **Ref:** Al Yarimi (Yem)
North Korea: Ju Kwang-min - Ryang Myong-il, Pak Yong-jin (Yun Yong-il 57), Pak Nam-chol, Ri Kwang-hyok (Kim Myong-gyu 56), Pak Song-chol (Kim Song-yong 56), Ri Chol-myong, Choe Myong-ho, Ryang Yong-gi, Choe Chol-man, Pak Kwang-ryong.
Myanmar: Thitu Si-thu - Win Min-htut, Khin Maung-lwin, Khin Maung-tun, Shwe Hlaing-win, Zaw Lynn-tun (Moe Win 55), Zaw Htet-aung (Htay Aung 62), Tun Tun-win, Myo Min-tun, Pai Soe, Yan Paing (Kyaw Ko-ko 46).

Third-place play-off
Feb 27
Tajikistan 1 (Khakimov 11)
Myanmar 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** El Haddad (Leb)
Tajikistan: Dodov - Ergashev, Radzhabov, Sanankulov, Cheriev, Rabimov (Vasiev 83), Makhmudov, Fatkhullaev, Tukhtasunov, Khakimov (Saidov 90), Muhidinov (Nurullaev 70).
Myanmar: Thitu Si-thu - Win Min-htut, Moe Win, Khin Maung-lwin, Khin Maung-tun, Shwe Hlaing-win, Htay Aung (Myo Min-tun 73), Pai Soe, Aung Kyaw-moe (Pyaye Phyo-on 85), Yan Paing, Kyaw Ko-ko (Tun Tun-win 45).

Final
Feb 27
Turkmenistan 1 (Shamuradov 33)
North Korea 1 (Ryang Yong-gi 76)
Aet. HT: 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 3,000.
Ref: Faghani (Iri)
North Korea 5-4 on pens
Turkmenistan: B Berdiyev - Annageldiyev, Belyn, Gurajayev, Nurmuradov, Sarkisov, Cholliyev (Rejepov 65), Mingazov (Ovekov 80), Shamuradov, Urazov (Karadanov 46), Amanov.
North Korea: Ju Kwang-min - Ryang Myong-il, Pak Yong-jin, Pak Nam-chol, Ri Kwang-hyok, Pak Song-chol, Sin Yong-nam (Yun Yong-il 74), Ri Chol-myong, Ryang Yong-gi, Choe Chol-man (Jon Kwang-ik 42), Pak Kwang-ryong (Choe Tu-yong 61). *Sent off: Ryang Myong-il 32min.*

North Korea qualify for 2011 Asian Cup finals

Success...China's Feng Xiaoting

champions South Korea on their way to winning the East Asian Championship.

"I think victory in this championship is a chance that Chinese football will change," said China coach Gao Hongbo.

GABON

Rohr widens net

Former Nantes manager Gernot Rohr has signed a two-year contract to coach the co-hosts of the 2012 African Nations Cup.

Rohr, who succeeds his former Bordeaux team-mate Alain Giresse and has never managed at international level, hopes to entice Europe-based players to join him. "We are going to try to convince players and their agents that it is worth more to be a first-team Gabonese international rather than play at amateur level in England or France," he says.

HOLLAND

Goals at last

Dirk Kuyt and Klaas-Jan Huntelaar were on target as Holland ended a run of three consecutive goalless draws with a 2-1 victory over fellow World Cup finalists USA.

Carlos Bocanegra's late consolation for the visitors deprived Bert Van Marwijk's team of a sixth consecutive clean sheet.

On target...Kuyt (left)

EAST ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

In Tokyo

Feb 6
Japan 0
China 0
Att: 25,984. **Ref:** Delevski (Aus)
Japan: Narazaki - Tulio Tanaka, Nagatomo, Uchida, Nakazawa, Endo, Inamoto, K Nakamura (Kanazaki 85), Okubo (K Sato 85), Okazaki, Tamada (Hirayama 62).
China: Yang Zhi - Zhang Linpeng, Sun Xiang (Du Bo 46), Zhao Peng, Hong Hao, Du Wei, Zhao Xuri (Feng Xiaoting 84), Jiang Ning, Deng Zhuoxiang, Yang Hao, Gao Lin (Yang Xu 83).

Feb 7
South Korea 5 (Kim Jung-woo 10, Koo Ja-cheol 24, Lee Dong-gook 32, Lee Seung-yeoul 37, Nn Byung-jun 90)
Hong Kong 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 2,728. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Oh Beom-seok (Kwak Tae-hwi 63), Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Jung-soo, Park Joo-ho, Kim Bo-kyung, Kim Jung-woo, Koo Ja-cheol, Oh Jang-eun (Nn Byung-jun 46), Lee Seung-yeoul, Lee Dong-gook (Kim Jae-sung 72).
Hong Kong: Zhang Chinhui - Lee Chi-ho, Ambassis, Ng Wai-chiu, Chan Wai-ho, Poon Yiu-cheuk, Li Haiqiang (Au Yeung Yiu Chung 74), Leung Chun-pong, Kwok Kin-pong (Xu Deshuai 85), Man Pei-tak (Bai He 57), Chao Pengfei.

Feb 10
China 3 (Yu Hai 5, Gao Lin 27, Deng Zhuoxiang 69)
South Korea 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 3,629. **Ref:** Ng (HK)
China: Yang Zhi - Du Wei, Feng Xiaoting, Zhang Linpeng, Hong Hao, Yang Hao, Zhao Xuri (Yan Feng 72), Yu Hai, Deng Zhuoxiang (Zhao Peng 87), Qu Bo, Gao Lin (Jiang Ning 63).
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Oh Beom-seok, Kwak Tae-hwi, Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Jung-soo (Park Joo-ho 16), Kim Do-heon (Nn Byung-jun 62), Kim Jung-woo, Koo Ja-cheol, Oh Jang-eun, Lee Keun-ho (Lee Seung-yeoul 46), Lee Dong-gook.

Feb 11
Japan 3 (Tamada 41, 82, Tulio Tanaka 85)
Hong Kong 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 16,368. **Ref:** Zhao (Chn)
Japan: Narazaki - Komano, Tulio Tanaka, Uchida, Konno (Hirayama 46), Nakazawa, Endo, K Nakamura, Okubo (Kagawa 76), Ogasawara (Inamoto 62), Tamada.
Hong Kong: Yapp Hung-fai - Lee Chi-ho, Ng Wai-chiu (Ambassis 75), Wong Chin-hung, Chan Wai-ho, Xu Deshuai (Lee Hong-lim 83), Au Yeung Yiu Chung, Leung Chun-pong, Kwok Kin-pong (Lee Wai-lim 68), Bai He, Chao Pengfei.

Feb 14
Hong Kong 0
China 2 (Du Bo 44, pen 74)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,439. **Ref:** Kim (Ska)
Hong Kong: Yapp Hung-fai - Lee Chi-ho (Man Pei-tak 81), Ambassis, Lee Wai-lun, Wong Chin-hung, Xu Deshuai (Leung Tsz-chun 86), Au Yeung Yiu Chung, Leung Chun-pong, Kwok Kin-pong, Bai He, Chao Pengfei (Cheng Lai-hin 88).
China: Yang Zhi - Du Wei (Feng Xiaoting 86), Zhao Peng, Hong Hao, Liu Jianye, Zheng Linpeng, Deng Zhuoxiang, Yang Hao, Yu Hai (Wu Lei 57), Qu Bo, Gao Lin (Jiang Ning 70).

Feb 14
Japan 1 (Endo pen 23)
South Korea 3 (Lee Dong-gook pen 33, Lee Seung-yeoul 39, Kim Jae-sung 70)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 42,951. **Ref:** Delevski (Aus)
Japan: Narazaki - Tulio Tanaka, Nagatomo, Uchida, Nakazawa, Endo, Inamoto, K Nakamura, Okubo, Kagawa 26; Inamoto 46), Okazaki, Tamada (K Sato 82). *Sent off: Tulio Tanaka 41min.*
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Oh Beom-seok, Kang Min-soo, Cho Yong-hyung, Park Joo-ho, Kim Jae-sung, Kim Jung-woo, Kim Bo-kyung (Oh Jang-eun 87), Shin Hyung-min, Lee Seung-yeoul (Koo Ja-cheol 56), Lee Dong-gook (Lee Keun-ho 82). *Sent off: Kim Jung-woo 52min.*

EAST ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China	3	2	1	0	5	0	7
South Korea	3	2	0	1	8	4	6
Japan	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Hong Kong	3	0	0	3	0	10	0

FRIENDLIES

Tuesday, February 2

Feb 2 - Oita
Japan 0
Venezuela 0
Att: 27,008. **Ref:** Fan (Chn)
Japan: Narazaki - Nakazawa, Tulio Tanaka, Tekunaga (Komano 59), Nagatomo, Ogasawara (Kanazaki 75), Endo, Inamoto, K Nakamura (Hirayama 66), Okubo (Kagawa 84), Okazaki (K Sato 75).
Venezuela: Morales - Romero, Rey, G Cichero, Salazar, Lucena (Perez 85), D Glorg, A Flores (Fuenmayor 73), Guerra (Gomez 81), Moreno (Farias 90), Arteaguieta (A Rondon 68).

Wednesday, February 10

Feb 10 - Mar del Plata
Argentina 2 (Palermo 82, Canuto 90)
Jamaica 1 (R Johnson 46)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)
Argentina: Ibanez - Mercado (Canuto 89), Edavemrla (Caruzzo 71), Galeano (Galban 55), Montoya, Toranzo, Mercier, Acevedo (Mendez 60), F Insua, Jara (Haucha 46), Palermo.
Jamaica: Miller - Thomas, Palmer (Richards 63), J Taylor, A Reid, Austin, Edwards, Boyd (Demar Stewart 63), Daley (Watson 68), Cummings (Jason Johnson 90), R Johnson (Hodges 78).

Friday, February 19

Feb 19 - Abu Dhabi, UAE
Kuwait 1 (Ajab 38)
Syria 1 (Al Hussain 81)
HT: 0-0

Wednesday, February 24

Feb 24 - Al Ain City, UAE
Kuwait 4 (Ajab 33, 42, Al Salman 51, Al Breiki 60)
Bahrain 1 (Abdulrahman 19)
HT: 2-1

Feb 24 - San Francisco, USA
Mexico 5 (Barrera 2, Hernandez 12, 19, Luna 18, Aguilar 52)
Bolivia 0
HT: 4-0
Mexico: Orozco - Magallon, Aguilar (I Castro 89), Ayala, Torres Nilo, Torrado, Luna (Rojas 60), Noriega (Juarez 55), Barrera (De Nigris 46), Blanco (A Medina 46), Hernandez (Reyna 46).
Bolivia: D Vaca (Lampe 65) - Eguino, Rodriguez, Rojas(ano, Amadori, Ribera (Torrico 85), H Gutierrez (N Suarez 22), Vejarga, Olivares (Andaverde 46), Galindo, Alvarez.

Feb 24 - Tampa
United States 2 (Ching 75, Kljestan 90)
El Salvador 1 (Corrales 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 21,737. **Ref:** Petrescu (Can)
United States: Rimando - Evans, Bornstein, Goodson, Pearce, Rogers (Cameron 86), Kljestan, Beckerman (McCarty 79), Davis (Gaven 46), Casey (Ching 46), Findley (Cunningham 68).
El Salvador: Mentes - Escobar, Marvin Gonzalez, R Flores (J Flores 75), Salazar, Umanzor, Sanchez, Romero (Alas 71), Mesquita, Corrales, Alvarez.

Thursday, February 25

Feb 25 - Amman
Jordan 0
Azerbaijan 2 (Ramim 1, Ismayilov 32)
HT: 0-2

Saturday, February 27

Feb 27 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 1 (Bakhtiar 55)
Yemen 0
HT: 0-0

Tuesday, March 2

Mar 2 - Vieux-Habitants
Guadeloupe 2 (Arbau 30, 36)
St Kitts & Nevis 1 (G Isaac pen 14)
HT: 2-1
Guadeloupe: Celigny (Cabou 46) - Lilia, Jerome (Michinaud 46), Onestas (Babel 46), Laurence, Pascal, Lamboanta, Pommier (Aubetin 46), Grmez, Lafortune, Arbau (Tacda 55).
St Kitts & Nevis: Byron - Mitchum, Richards, Lander, S Isaac, Lake, Sadiller (Elliott 58), G Isaac, Ward (Nurse 58), Clarke, O'Loughlin (Jeffers 58).

Mar 2 - London
Republic of Ireland 0
Brazil 2 (Andreas og 44, Robinho 76)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,082. **Ref:** Dean (Eng)
Rep Ireland: Given - Kelly, McShane, St Ledger, Kilbane, Lawrence (McCarthy 59), Whelan (Gibson 56), Andrews, Duff (McGeady 56), Doyle (Best 78), Keane.
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Maicon (Carlos Eduardo 64), Lucio (Luisao 82), Juan, Michel Bastos, Gilberto Silva, Felipe Melo, Ramires (Daniel Alves 64), Kaka, Adriano (Grafite 64), Robinho (Nilmar 77).

Wednesday, March 3

Mar 3 - Tirana
Albania 1 (Skela 26)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,500. **Ref:** Pilav (Bos)
Albania: Hidi - Lila, Daiku, Mangali, Angoli (Cana 63), Lala (Ryka 63), Curri, Bulku (Kapllani 84), Duro (Bakaj 74), Sketa (Vila 80), Bogdani (Salihi 46).
Northern Ireland: Taylor (Tuffey 71) - Little, McGivern, McCartney, Craigan, O'Connor (C Evans 46), McGinn (Shiels 46), Davis, Healy (Kirk 78), Lafferty (Patterson 64), McCann.

Mar 3 - Algiers
Algeria 0
Serbia 3 (Pantelic 16, Kuzmanovic 58, Z Tosic 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Badini (Sen)
Algeria: Gamouna - Rahal, Kaliche (Lafouhi 86), Yahia, Belhadj, Laoen (Zamil 82), Mamoun, Yelda, Ziani (Abdoun 71), Matmour, Ghezzal (Djebbour 63).
Serbia: Stojkovic (Brkic 82) - Krstev (Kuzmanovic 46), Subotic (Kacar 86), Lukovic (Lazovic 90), Ivanovic (Rukavina 67), Jovanovic (Z Tosic 53), Stankovic (Dragusinovic 46), Milijas (Petrovic 63), Zigic (Ninkovic 76), Krasic (Jankovic 67), Pantelic (Lekic 46).

Mar 3 - Luanda
Angola 1 (Job 75)
Latvia 1 (Kalisons 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Carola (Ang)
Angola: Lama - Jamuina (Adawa 46), Kali, Job (Minguito 88), Kara, Pedro Henriques (Rasca 46), Manucho Barros 84), Joanzinho (Amaro 46), Machado, Ze Kalanga (Nandinho 31), Castigo (Jaca 46), Mahina.
Latvia: Romanovs - Klava, Astafjevs (Tarasovs 73), Zirnis (Fertelis 79), Laizans, Ivanovs, Mihadjuks, Solonicins (Zigajevs 68), Rubins (Krjaukiis 82), Karlsons, Perepistsins (Blanks 65).

Mar 3 - Antalya, Turkey
Armenia 1 (Pachajyan 59)
Belarus 3 (Putsila 58, A Heb 73, Rodionov 85)
HT: 0-0

Mar 3 - Vienna
Austria 2 (Schiemer 12, Wallner 37)
Denmark 1 (Bendtner 17)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 12,500. **Ref:** Kralovec (Cze)
Austria: Gratzer - Dag, Dragovic (Prodl 64), Scharner, Fuchs, Beichler (Dimmel 88), Schiemer, Baumgartlinger, Kavlak (Aidas 73), Wallner, Janko (Wolf 63).
Denmark: T Sorensen - Kjaer, Kroldrup, Jessen (Lumb 46), Kvist (Nymann 76), Silberbauer, D Jensen (Eriksen 57), Kahlenberg, Krohn-Dehli, Bendtner (Lekic 57), Rommedahl (Rieks 46).

Mar 3 - Brussels
Belgium 0
Croatia 1 (Kranjcar 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)
Belgium: Sailly - Coppaert, Kompany (Lombaerts 71), Vermaelen (Alderweireld 83), Van Damme, Hazard (Blondel 75), Vertonghen, Martens (Sonck 46), Witsel, Dembele (Carcela-Gonzalez 71), Lukaku (Buffel 75).
Croatia: Ronjic - Kirasanac (Rakitic 55), Simunic (Lovren 46), Corluka, Srna (Gabric 90), Vukojevic (Dujmovic 83), Modric (Pranjic 69), Kranjcar, Calic, Bilic (Mandzukic 85), Olic (Eduardo 55).

Mar 3 - Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Ibisevic 40, Pjanic 65)
Ghana 1 (Muntari 22)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Batinic (Cro)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic (Begovic 46) - Spahic, Nadarevic, Salihovic, Jahic (Berberovic 63), Rahimic (Muratovic 46), Ibricic (Muslimovic 46), Pjanic, Misimovic (Medunjanin 73), Ibisevic (Zec 90), Dzeko.
Ghana: Agyei - D Addy (Mensah 64), E Addo, L Addy, Muntari (Anbul 46), B Ayew (Inkoom 46), Annan, Agyemang-Badu, Tagoe (A Ayew 46), Asamoah (Boateng 35), M Amoah (Gyan 46).

Win...Ddai Al-Salfy (right) of Jordan

JORDAN

Cup qualification

Despite going into their last Asian Cup qualifying game against Singapore bottom of their group, Jordan earned themselves a place in next year's finals with a 2-1 victory: was enough to ensure second place for Kuwait in Group B and a spot in the Asian Cup finals.

"We planned for this happy ending and we forced our tactics on the Omani national team," said Kuwait coach Goran Tufegdzic.

KUWAIT

All going to plan

A goalless draw away to Oman

LITHUANIA

Zutautas given chance

At the age of 37, Raimondas Zutautas has become the youngest-ever coach of the national team, replacing Jose Couceiro who left the position in December. A former international midfielder, he won league titles and played in the Champions League with Israeli side Maccabi Haifa and Panathinaikos of Greece.

Bad start...Kranjcar

MONTENEGRO

Debut defeat

Zlatko Kranjcar, the father of

Mar 3 - Larnaca
Cyprus 0
Iceland 0
Ref: Yordanov (Bul)
Cyprus: Avgousti - Christou, Michael (Poursaitidis 46), Elia, Makrides (Panagi 86), M Nikolaou (Manoglou 46), Alexofte, Christoff, Papathanasiou (Efrem 58), Avraam, Debrasinovic.
Iceland: Arason (Gunnlaugsson 38) - R Sigurdsson (Adalsteinsson 86), Ottesen, Arnason, I Sigurdsson, O I Gislason (B Gudjonsson 74), A E Gunnarsson, Danielsson, R Gislason, Hallfredsson (Palmason 83), Helguson.

Mar 3 - Los Angeles, USA
El Salvador 1 (Quintanilla 88)
Guatemala 2 (Pappa 45, Brown 84)
HT: 0-1
El Salvador: Morales - Umanzor (Romero 69), Marvin Gonzalez, Escobar, Manuel Gonzalez, Castillo (Mencioso 85), Sanchez, Alvarez, Julio Martinez, Corrales (Martin 78), Quintanilla.
Guatemala: Guerra - G Cabrera, Flores, L Rodriguez, Galindo, Thompson, Guevara, Romero (Castellanos 89), Pappa (Trigueros 84), Ramirez (Brown 59), Mentepeque (Marquez 74).

Mar 3 - London
England 3 (Crouch 56, 80, Wright-Phillips 75)
Egypt 1 (Zidan 23)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 80,692. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
England: Green - Brown, Terry, Upson, Baines, Walcott (Wright-Phillips 57), Lampard (Carrick 46), Barry, Gerrard (Milner 73), Rooney (C Cole 86), Defoe (Crouch 46).
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhammadi, Said (Salem 88), Fathy, Gomaa, Ghaly, Moawad (Abdel Shafy 76), Hassan (Gedo 64), Abd Rabo, Zidan (Aboutrika 76), Motaab (Zaki 64).

Mar 3 - Paris
France 0
Spain 2 (Villa 21, Sergio Ramos 45)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 79,021. **Ref:** Thomsen (Sco)
France: Lloris - Sagna, Gallas, Escoude, Eric, Toulalan, L Diarra, Ribery (Malouda 74), Gourcuff, Henry (Govou 85), Anelka (Cissa 77).
Spain: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Pique, Puyol (Albiol 46), Arbeloa, Xabi Alonso (Senna 64), Busquets, Silva (Guiza 88), Fabregas (Xavi 46), Iniesta (Jesus Navas 64), Villa (Fernando Torres 46).

Mar 3 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Kobiashvili pen 45, Shkalov 90)
Estonia 1 (Purje 83)
HT: 1-0
Georgia: Loria - Salukvadze (Shushashvili 66), Asatiani, Kalandze, Kvirkvelia, Khizanishvili (Merebashvili 55), Gogua (Kashia 83), Martsvaladze (Merebashvili 46), A Iashvili (Skadze 86), Kobiashvili, Dvalishvili (Nebsadze 46).
Estonia: Aksalu (Kolenko 46) - Saare, Borengrub, Piiroja, Kruglov, Sidorenkov (Rahn 46), Vunk, S Puri, Vassiljev (Dmitrijev 46), Voskoboinikov (Purje 59), Kink (Kams 59).

Mar 3 - Munich
Germany 0
Argentina 1 (Higuain 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 65,152. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Germany: Adler - Boateng, Mertesacker, Tasci, Lahm, Ballack, Schweinsteiger (Kheira 76), Muller (Klose 67), Ozil (Cacau 67), Podolski, Klose (Gomez 46).
Argentina: Romero - Otamendi, Demichelis (N Burdisso 57), Samuel, Heinze (O Rodriguez 47), Mascherano, Gutierrez, Veron (Belaustri 90), Di Maria, Messi, Higuain (Tevez 62).

Mar 3 - Volos
Greece 0
Senegal 2 (Niang 71, Ndaw 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Skomina (Slo)
Greece: Tzorvas (Chalkias 46) - Meros (Mokos 70), Vyntra, Spyropoulos, Kyrgiakos, Tziolis, Katsouranis, Karagounis (Papadopoulos 46), Samaras (Christodoulopoulos 65), Charisteas (Salpingidis 46), Kapetanos (Gekas 46).
Senegal: K Ndiaye - Faty, Diawara, Drame, Tavarez (Thiourn 83), Gomis (Ndaw 57), Mangane (Diakhate 77), Dia (D Ba 70), S Camara (M B Diouf 57), Kamara (Sow 46), Niang.

Mar 3 - Amsterdam
Holland 2 (Kuyt pen 40, Huntelaar 73)
United States 1 (Bocanegra 88)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Holland: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Heitinga, Mathijsen (Vlaar 46), Van Bronckhorst (Braafheid 67), Robben (Huntelaar 46), De Jong (Van der Vaart 60), Sneijder, Van Bommel (Afellay 74), Elia, Kuyt (Babel 90).
United States: Howard - Spector, Bocanegra, DeMerit (Pearce 70), Bornstein (Gordon 86), Holden (Beasley 34), Bradley, Torres (Edu 46), Donovan (Johnson 78), Altidore, Findley (Bedoya 63).

Mar 3 - Gyor
Hungary 1 (Nagy 28)
Russia 1 (Bilyaletdinov 59)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000
Hungary: Kiraly - Bodnar, Vancsik, Juhasz, Horvath (Dardai 72), Szelesi, Boder (Hajnal 62), Huszti (Koltai 86), Bozsaky (Tozser 46), Rudolf (Szalai 79), Torghelle.
Russia: Akinfeev (Sabitov 46) - Anyukov, Kolodin (V Berezutsky 83), Yanbaev, Ignashevich, Bilyaletdinov (V Bystrov 84), Denisov, Semshov (Arshavin 46), Zyryanov, Semak, Pogrebnyak (Pavlyuchenko 46). *Sent off: Denisov 89min.*

Mar 3 - Monte Carlo
Italy 0
Cameroon 0
Att: 10,752. **Ref:** Erijimi (Fra)
Italy: Marchetti - Bonucci, Cannavaro (Cassani 62), Chiellini, Maggio, Pirlo (Montolivo 46), De Rossi (Gattuso 46), Criscito (Marchisio 46), Cassu, Sorrisito (Pazzini 46), Di Natale (Quagliarella 61).
Cameroon: Hamidou - Mbia (Aduriz 75), N'Koulou, Bassong (Nounkeu 46), Assou-Ekotto, Mandjeck, A Song (Makoun 58), Enoh (Matip 46), Emana (Tchoyi 46), Kouemaha (Webo 75), Eto'o.

Mar 3 - Tripoli
Libya 2 (Al Maghrabi pen 35, Al Deelawi 81)
Mali 1 (B Coulibaly 15)
HT: 1-1

Mar 3 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 1 (Strasser 34)
Azerbaijan 2 (Guliyev 28, Mammadov 37)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 674. **Ref:** Kari (Fin)
Luxembourg: Joubert - Bisiaux, Schnell, Strasser, Kintziger (Martins 64), Hoffmann (Feyel 67), Peters, Janisch, Mutsch, Bettinger (Da Mota 54), Kitenge.
Azerbaijan: Aghayev (Valiyev 22) - Mehdiev, Sultayev, Alekhov, Mislilov, Alasgov, Chertogonov (Yunusoglu 46), Shukurov, Mammadov, Aliyev (Ramim 57), Guliyev.

Mar 3 - Skopje
Macedonia 2 (Naumoski 27, Pandev 30)
Montenegro 1 (Basa 62)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Jankij (Ab)
Macedonia: Pacovski (Nunceinoski 70) - Noveski (Sedloski 46), Popov, I Mitreski (Ombarov 46), Georgievski, Sumulikoski, Pandev (Alimi 77), Naumoski (Savic 46), Despotovski, Luzanovski (Todorovski 73), Stojkov (Ibraimi 46).
Montenegro: Poleksic (M Bozovic 46) - Zverotic (Delic 63), Basa, Jovanovic, Pejovic (Lakicevic 77), Pekovic, Kascelan (Ogrijanovic 65), Boskovic, S Vukcevic (Delibasic 60), Vucinic, Damjanovic (Dalovic 46).

Mar 3 - Valletta
Malta 1 (M Mifsud 17)
Finland 2 (R Eremenko pen 66, Vayrynen 69)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bergonzi (Ita)
Malta: Haber - A Muscat, A Agius, Scicluna (Caruana 59), Failla (Bezzina 51), Pace (P Fenech 82), R Fenech, B Iffa (Cilia 77), Bogdanovic, Cohen (Woods 65), M Mifsud (S Bajada 85).
Finland: Enckelman (Fredriksson 46) - Lampi, Moisander, Kallio (Lyyski 57), Riihilahti, R Eremenko, Sparv (Vayrynen 46), Hamalainen (Kolkka 76), Peltokana, Litmanen (Tainio 46), Johansson (Pukki 83).

Mar 3 - Pasadena, USA
Mexico 2 (Hernandez 53, Vela 57)
New Zealand 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 90,526. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)
Mexico: Michel - Salcido, Marquez, Osorio, Juarez (F Rodriguez 46), Torrado (Moreno 46), J Dos Santos (Luna 60), G Dos Santos, Guardado (I Castro 66), Blanco (Hernandez 46), De Nigris (Vela 46).
New Zealand: Moss - Sigmund, Lochhead, Smith, Boyens, Elliott, Brown (Barron 79), Bertos, Coombes (McGlinchey 54), Smeltz (Wood 79), Killen (Fallon 54).

Mar 3 - Antalya, Turkey
Moldova 1 (Epureanu 65)
Kazakhstan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Berberovskiy (Rus)
Moldova: Stanislav Namasco (Saidachenko 90) - Armas, Boiet (Bolohan 69), Galustenko, Epureanu, Tigiras, Cebotaru (Orica 86), Bugaiov (Gerasim 88), Dorus (V Anatoniie 72), Savinov, Golban (Samsev 46).
Kazakhstan: Sidelnikov - Irismetov, Rojkov, Kislitsyn, Averyanov, Hjinosskin (Finoncenko 90), Karpovich, Kuleev (Abdulin 78), Nurgaliev, Logvinenko, Erbes (Shunyk 86). *Sent off: Logvinenko 75min.*

Mar 3 - Maputo
Mozambique 0
Botswana 1 (Mogalatsi pen 8)
HT: 0-1

Mar 3 - Abuja
Nigeria 5 (P Utaka 11, Idahen 28, 85, Nsofor 31, 52)
DR Congo 2 (Bedi 43, 71)
HT: 3-1

Mar 3 - Warsaw
Poland 2 (Blaszczykowski 43, R Lewandowski 82)
Bulgaria 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Kever (Swi)
Poland: Kuszczak - Kowalczyk, Zewlakow, Glik, Dudka, Peszko (Lodiewicz 59, Murawski (Sedlok 85), Majewski (Iwanski 46), Blaszczykowski (Malecki 78), Obiaraniak (Rybus 46), R Lewandowski (Nowak 74).
Bulgaria: Ivankov - Minev (K Simyenov 88), Milanov, Angelov, Georgiev (Kambourov 69), Yankov (Milkov 77), S Petrov, I Ivanov (I Stoyanov 77), Sarmov, Berbatov (Bozhinov 46), Popov (Dimitrov 46).

Mar 3 - Coimbra
Portugal 2 (Hugo Almeida 36, Liedson 90)
China 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Hamoudi (Alg)
Portugal: Eduardo (Hilario 46) - Paulo Ferreira, Rolando, Bruno Alves (Tonel 84), Duda (Miguel 46), Raul Meireles, Tiago (Pedro Mendes 46), Cristiano Ronaldo (Liedson 46), Simao (Joao Moutinho 46), Nani (Silvestre Varela 62), Hugo Almeida.
China: Zhang Lu - Cao Yang (Zhao Kun 46), Du Wei, Wang Qiang, Rong Hao (He Yang 73), Shao Jiayi (Jiang Ning 46), Zhang Linpeng, Gu Bo (Wang Gang 62), Zheng Zhi (Liu Jianye 73), Yu Hai (Hao Junmin 92), Gao Lin (Zhang Chengdong 46).

Mar 3 - Timisoara
Romania 0
Israel 2 (Benayoun 45, Barda pen 84)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)
Romania: Pantilimon - Mutu, Goian (Tamas 46), Radoi, Nesu (Sepsi 88), Roman (Dica 46), Codrea (Paduretu 72), Florescu (Ghiurea 82), Nicolita (Andrei Cristea 76), D Nicolae (Bucur 57), Marica (M Nicolae 57).
Israel: Aouate (Davidovitch 46) - Saban, Ben Haim (Mori 79), Atzili (Keinan 53), Ziv, Vermut (Natchin 70), Kayal (Gafni 90), Yanin (Cohen 46), Benayoun (Golan 80), Shechter (Arbeitman 46), Colautti (Barda 46).

Mar 3 - Glasgow
Scotland 1 (Brown 62)
Czech Republic 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 28,530. **Ref:** Faubel (Fra)
Scotland: Gordon - Hutton, G Caldwell, Webster (Berra 46), L Wallace, Dorrans, D Fletcher (Whittaker 83), Brown, Thomson (Hartley 46), Robson (Adam 69), K Miller (Boyd 63).
Czech Republic: Drobny - Kisnir (Rudi 88), Hubnik, Sivok, Kadlec, Plasil (Moravek 79), Holek, Hubschman (Rajnoch 79), Rosicky (Skacel 66), Nedvd (Blazek 67), Sverkos (Papadopulos 67).

Mar 3 - Zilina
Slovakia 0
Norway 1 (Moldskred 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,756. **Ref:** Nijmus (Hol)
Slovakia: Mucha - Petrasik (Petras 84), Sirlas (Kopunec 74), Durica, Zabownik, Karhan, Jendrisek, Sapara (Stech 71), Hamsik (Kozak 84), Weiss (Sestula 72), Vittek (Hasdako 61).
Norway: Knudsen - Hogli, Waernes, Hangeland (Demirtov 74), J A Riise, Mannskaet (Rudi 84), B H Riise (Skjelbred 62), Haugen, Grindheim (Tettey 90), Gamst Pedersen, Braaten (Huseklepp 62).

Tottenham Hotspur's Niko Kranjcar and the man who led Croatia at the 2006 World Cup finals, replaced Serbia's Zoran Filipovic as coach of Montenegro but suffered a 2-1 defeat away to Macedonia in his first game.

Congratulations...Levein (right)

SCOTLAND

New boss gets rid of old unwanted record

Craig Levein got his career as national coach off to a winning start and removed a millstone from the country's neck as Scott Brown's goal against Czech Republic gave Scotland their first friendly victory at Hampden Park for 14 years.

SOUTH KOREA

Friendly clash

Huh Jung-moo's side have lined-up a friendly against Ecuador on May 16, ahead of the World Cup in South Africa.

SPAIN

Polish opposition

The reigning European champions will face Poland at home on June 8 in their final World Cup warm-up game.

USA

Turkey on menu

Turkey will play the USA at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia on May 29.

Venue...Lincoln Financial Field

Mar 3 - Maribor
Slovenia 4 (Novakovic 14, Cesar 30, Kirm 34, Jokic 66)
Qatar 1 (Montesin 41)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 4,900
Slovenia: S Handanovic (Seliga 70) - Brecko (Bic 64), Suler, Cesar (Kelhar 78), Koren, Birsa (Sisic 64), Novakovic, Jokic, Dedic (Ljubijankic 56), Kirm, Radosavljevic (Krhin 64).

Mar 3 - Durban
South Africa 1 (Mphela 70)
Namibia 1 (Bester 43)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 32,000
South Africa: Khune - Ngcongca (Moon 60), Sangweni, Franeman, Carnell (Tinwala 80), Modise, Davids (Letsholonyane 46), Khuboni, S Tshabalala (Klate 60), L Mokoena (Segolela 46), Mphela.
Namibia: Mbaha - Teremba, Gariseb, O Risser, Gelingob, Tjikuzu (Isaacks 74), Jacobs, Karongee, Pinatjies (Shipanga 78), W Risser (Pienaar 90), Bester (Louw 87).

Mar 3 - London
South Korea 2 (Lee Dong-gook 4, Kwak Tae-hwi 90)
Ivory Coast 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Cha Du-ri, Lee Jung-soo (Kwak Tae-hwi 61), Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Young-pyo, Lee Chung-yong, Kim Jung-woo, Ki Sung-yueng (Kim Jae-sung 77), Park Ji-sung, Lee Dong-gook (Ahn Jung-hwan 46), Lee Keun-ho (Kim Nam-il 46).
Ivory Coast: Barry - Eboue, Bamba, Meite (Zoro 80), Tiene, Keita (Doumbia 62), Kone, Romaric, B Kone (Fae 56), Dindane (Sangare 87), Drogba.

Mar 3 - St Gallen
Switzerland 1 (Inler pen 29)
Uruguay 3 (Forlan 35, Suarez 49, Cavani 87)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 12,540. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Switzerland: Wolfli - Lichtsteiner, Rossini (Von Bergen 46), Grichting, Ziegler (Spycher 46), Behrami (Fernandes 75), Inler, Schweiger (Chiumiento 46), Shanjri (Barnetta 46), Streller (Bunjaku 46), Derdiyok.
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Scotti, Godin, Fucile, Perez, Gargano (Arevalo 63), A Pereira (J Rodriguez 72), Ledesma (Martinez 46; S Fernandez 82), Forlan (Abreu 46), Suarez (Cavani 63).

Mar 3 - Mwanza
Tanzania 2 (Haroub, Nasri)
Uganda 3 (Matovu, Juma, Kasule)
HT: 0-1

Mar 3 - Istanbul
Turkey 2 (Emre Gungor 41, Hamit Altintop 55)
Honduras 0
HT: 1-0
Turkey: Volkan Demirel - Sabri (Kazim 84), Emre Gungor, Servet, Caner, Hamit Altintop, Mehmet Aurelio (Necip 81), Emre Belozoglu (Nuri 77), Arda (Ozan 62), Volkan Sen (Halil Altintop 46), Mevlut (Tuncay 46).
Honduras: Escober - Sabillon, Bernardez, Figueroa, Izaguirre, Alvarez (W Martinez 46), Turcios (Morales 64), W Palacios (Thomas 68), De Leon (Guevara 46), Suazo (Pavon 46), Costly (Welcome 80).

Mar 3 - Barquisimeto
Venezuela 1 (G Gonzalez pen 90)
Panama 2 (R Torres 8, B Perez 50)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 37,000. **Ref:** Buitriago (Col)
Venezuela: Dudamel (Morales 44) - Rosales (Orozco 76), Vizcarrondo, Salazar (Perez 46), Fuenmayor, Flores (D Giorgi 56), Seijas (Pena 70), C Gonzalez, Rincon, Fedor, Moreno (Del Valle 70).
Panama: Penedo - Moreno (Algandona 80), Machado, R Torres, Gomez, A Henriquez, Godoy, Barahona (Avalle 74), Escobar, B Perez (Pole 90), Tejada (Walthe 78).

Mar 3 - Swansea
Wales 0
Sweden 1 (Elmander 43)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 8,258. **Ref:** Black (NI)
Wales: Myhill (Hennessey 46) - Gunter, Williams, J Collins, Bale (Nyatanga 67), Morgan, C Evans (Earnshaw 46), Collison (Crofts 71), S Davies (Cotterill 64), Church (Vokes 53), Vaughan.
Sweden: Gustafsson - S Larsson, Mellberg, Majstorovic, Safari (Wendt 62), A Svensson, Kallstrom (V Elm 80), Wilhelmsson (Ljalig 73), Elmander (Hysen 58), R Elm (Wernbloem 58), Toivonen.

Mar 3 - Harare
Zimbabwe 2 (G Nyirenda ng 17, Ruskie 25)
Malawi 1 (Mkandawire 13)
HT: 2-1
Zimbabwe: Sibanda - Mapemba, Karimapfumbi, Mwanjali, Veremu, Rambanapasi (Meikle 85), Kamusoko (Chawawa 46), Vimistayi (Mteki 50), Musheikwi (Malajila), Musona, Ruskie.
Malawi: Nthala - H Nyirenda, G Nyirenda, M Msowoya, Kanyenda, D Banda, Mgandira (Mvaza 61), Simukonda (Milanzi 70), Harawa (Mwehlwa 44), Mkandawire (Tembo 76), Bridge (Chipofya 52).

Thursday, March 4
Mar 4 - San Felipe
Venezuela 1 (Pena pen 43)
North Korea 1 (Pak Nam-chol 7)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Penuela (Col)
Venezuela: Morales - Pernia (Clavijo 73), Perez, Salazar, Granadillo (Lujano 76), Di Giorgi, A Flores (F Flores 62), Pena, Cordero (Orozco 34), Farias (Garcia 51), Del Valle (Moreno 32).
North Korea: Ri Myong-guk - Cha Jong-hyok (Nam Sung-chol 30), Ri Jun-il, Pak Choi-jin, Ji Yun-nam, Ri Kwang-chon, Kim Yong-jun, Mun In-guk, Pak Nam-chol (Kim Kum-il 22), Choe Kum-chol (Kim Myong-won 25), An Chol-hyok.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS

Draw

Group A
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Germany
Kazakhstan
Turkey

Group B
Andorra
Armenia
Macedonia
Republic of Ireland
Russia
Slovakia

Group C
Estonia
Faroe Islands
Italy
Northern Ireland
Serbia
Slovenia

Group D
Albania
Belarus
Bosnia-Herzegovina
France
Luxembourg
Romania

Group E
Finland
Holland
Hungary
Moldova
San Marino
Sweden

Group F
Croatia
Georgia
Greece
Israel
Latvia
Malta

Group G
Bulgaria
England
Montenegro
Switzerland
Wales

Group H
Cyprus
Denmark
Iceland
Norway
Portugal

Group I
Czech Republic
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Scotland
Spain

Group winners and the runner-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the respective groups) qualify automatically for the finals. The eight remaining runners-up will be drawn in four head-to-head, two-leg play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Poland and Ukraine qualify automatically.

Matchdays:
2010 - September 3/4, September 7, October 8/9, October 12;
2011 - March 25/26, March 29, June 3/4, June 7, September 2/3, September 6, October 7/8, October 11

Play-off dates:
1st legs - November 11/12, 2011;
2nd legs - November 15, 2011

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Draw

Group A
Cape Verde
Liberia
Mali
Zimbabwe

Group B
Ethiopia
Guinea
Madagascar
Nigeria

Group C
Comoros
Libya
Mozambique
Zambia

Group D
Algeria
Central African Republic
Morocco
Tanzania

Group E
Cameroon
Democratic Republic of Congo
Mauritius
Senegal

Group F
Burkina Faso
Gambia
Mauritania
Namibia

Group G
Egypt
Niger
Sierra Leone
South Africa

Group H
Benin
Burundi
Ivory Coast
Rwanda

Group I
Congo
Ghana
Sudan
Swaziland

Group J
Angola
Guinea-Bissau
Kenya
Uganda

Group K
Botswana
Chad
Malawi
Tunisia

Group winners and the three runners-up with the best record qualify for the finals. In which co-hosts Equatorial Guinea and Gabon qualify automatically

Matchdays:
2010 - September 3/4/5, October 8/9/10;
2011 - March 25/26/27, June 3/4/5, September 2/3/4, October 7/8/9

PEOPLE in the news

New challenge...Hiddink

Hiddink leaves Russia and heads for Turkey

EUROPE

GUUS HIDDINK will become Turkey's new coach when his contract with Russia expires on June 30. The 63-year-old – who has previously managed Real Madrid and Chelsea, as well as Holland, South Korea and Australia – agreed a two-year deal, with the option of a further two more.

Hiddink rejected the offer of a new two-year contract to lead Russia in the qualifiers for the 2012 European Championships. He replaces FATIH TERIM, who stepped down after Turkey's failure to qualify for the 2010 World Cup.

Chelsea midfielder DECO wants to return to his native Brazil after the World Cup. The 32-year-old – who was born and raised in the state of Sao Paulo but represents Portugal after moving to Europe and gaining Portuguese citizenship – joined Chelsea from Barcelona in 2008 but has not been a first-choice for his club this season.

Struggling Bundesliga champions Wolfsburg confirmed LORENZ-GUNTHER KOSTNER as coach until the end of the season. He replaced ARMIN VEH, who was sacked in January.

Lazio sacked coach DAVIDE BALLARDINI and replaced him with former Napoli boss EDY REJA after a 1-0 defeat at home to Catania left the *Biancocelesti* in the relegation zone of Serie A. Reja was released from his contract with Croatian side Hajduk Split.

Chelsea keeper PETR CECH was named Czech Republic player of the year for the third time, edging out veteran striker MILAN BAROS of Turkish side Galatasaray and Bordeaux midfielder JAROSLAV PLASIL. Jablonec boss FRANTISEK KOMNACKY was coach of the year.

Former England manager SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON resigned as director of football at Notts County after less than seven months with the fourth-tier club.

Club focus...Petrov

Aston Villa captain STILIYAN PETROV is to retire from international football with Bulgaria after Euro 2012. The midfielder, who will be 32 by the time of the next Euro finals in Poland and Ukraine, has won 91 caps, scoring eight goals. He quit playing for his country once before, but returned to the international fold the following year.

LIAM BRADY is standing down as assistant manager of the Republic of Ireland to concentrate on his job as youth development director at Arsenal. "The Ireland role required me to be away a lot of time and I have decided it is not right to remain," said Brady, whose last match was the friendly against Brazil in March.

Brazil finale...Brady

Former Italy defender CHRISTIAN PANUCCI – who has played for Milan, Real Madrid, Internazionale, Chelsea, Monaco and Roma during his career – had his Parma contract cancelled by mutual consent.

Available...Panucci

Real Madrid legend LUIS MOLOWNY passed away at the age of 84. As a player, he won two Spanish league titles, the European Cup and the Spanish Cup, before taking over as coach and leading Real to three La Liga crowns, two UEFA Cups and two Spanish Cups.

STEVEN PRESSLEY took over from EDDIE MAY as manager of Falkirk, which means only four Scottish Premier League clubs – Hamilton, Rangers, St Johnstone and St Mirren – are still led by the same men who were in charge at the beginning of last season.

Former Penarol defender JUAN CARLOS GONZALEZ, who made two appearances when Uruguay won the World Cup in 1950 in Brazil, died aged 85. His remains will be buried at the Olympic Pantheon in Montevideo alongside other great Uruguayan sporting heroes.

Palmeiras sacked coach MURICY RAMALHO after a surprise 4-1 home defeat by Sao Caetano in the Sao Paulo state championship. They wasted no time in finding a replacement, appointing their opponent's coach, ANTONIO CARLOS ZAGO.

On his way...Ramalho

RON JANS, who had announced his intention to quit Dutch side Groningen at the end of this season, will take charge at Heerenveen next term.

AMERICAS

Former Real Madrid right-back CICINHO has returned to Brazil and joined Sao Paulo on loan from Roma until June.

Argentina's goalkeeper at the 2006 World Cup in Germany, ROBERTO ABBONDANZIERI, 37, joined Internacional of Brazil from Boca Juniors.

ORLANDO PECANHA, who played for Brazil when they won the World Cup for the first time, in Sweden in 1958, died from a heart attack at the age of 74. He was capped 30 times.

Ready for a rest...Ronaldo

Double World Cup winner RONALDO, who is now playing for Corinthians, will retire at the end of next year. The 33-year-old said of his current contract with the Brazilian club: "I've renewed for another two years and they will be the last of my career."

AFRICA

Ghana's Under-20 World Cup-winning coach, SELLAS TETTEH, was appointed the new national coach of Rwanda. Tetteh, who has been coaching local Ghanaian side Liberty Professionals in recent months, signed a two-year deal with the east African country.

National job...Tetteh

MANUEL JOSE resigned as national coach of Angola for personal reasons. The Portuguese's assistant, ZECA AMARAL, was appointed caretaker until a replacement is found.

Veteran defender ABDESLAM OUADDOU of Morocco and French club Nancy announced his retirement from international football.

ASIA

Former Australia coach GRAHAM ARNOLD, who is PIM VERBEEK's assistant with the Socceroos, will take charge of A-League side Central Coast Mariners after the World Cup finals this summer. He takes over from LAWRIE MCKINNA, who is stepping down to become Mariners' football operations manager.

Sydney skipper and former Australia midfielder STEVE CORICA has announced he will retire at the end of the current A-League season. The 36-year-old has played in England for Leicester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Walsall, as well as Sanfrecce Hiroshima in Japan.

Reigning UAE champions Al Ahli made former Ajax and Panathinaikos coach HENK TEN CATE their fourth boss of a disappointing season.

China Super League side Shandong Luneng have signed Dutch striker FRED BENSON on loan from Eredivisie side RKC Waalwijk. The 26-year-old was part of the Holland squad that won the 2006 European Under-21 Championship.

Chinese loan...Benson

Sydney goalkeeper CLINT BOLTON, who set a league record of 12 clean sheets as his side finished top of the table, has signed to play for A-League newcomers Melbourne Heart next season.

Former Internazionale and Sierra Leone striker MOHAMED KALLON joined Shaanxi Chanba of China.

OCEANIA

Tahiti international JEROME TETAVAHI died from injuries sustained in a car crash. The 26-year-old represented Tahiti at the South Pacific Games in 2007 and had been a key player for his club, Jeunes Tahitiens, this season.

NORWAY
TIPPELIGAEN 2010

Hail and farewell...Hamren is leaving champions Rosenborg to take the Sweden job

KEY DATES

Season starts
March 13, 2010
Season ends
November 7, 2010

THE expansion of the top flight last season to 16 teams means a record-breaking early start again with the domestic season kicking off on March 13. The long preparation period has been used to full effect and all the clubs have been on Spanish soil in La Manga to take part in tournaments.

Swedish coach Erik Hamren succeeded in taking **Rosenborg** back to the league title in his first full season, but there was huge disappointment in Trondheim when he decided to accept the job as national manager of his country soon afterwards. He will stay on for a period, though, while the club look for his successor.

Rosenborg will be favourites to retain their title. They have moved on fringe players Alexander Lund Hansen (to Odense) and Juska Savolainen (to newcomers Haugesund), and released Dario Zahora, Espen Johnsen and Roy Miller to reduce costs, but mostly they will miss midfielder Marek Sapara, who has joined Ankaragucu in Turkey.

Fredrik Winsnes has been brought back to the club as Sapara's replacement. The 34-year-old has had successful spells with Aalborg in Denmark and Stromsgodset since leaving in 2006.

Morten Moldskred was signed from Tromso to add pace and a finishing touch up front. He will also provide efficient service for Steffen Iversen and Rade Prica. Goalkeeper Daniel Orlund arrived from AIK of Sweden to provide some competition for Rune Jarstein.

Last season **Stabaek** did not manage to reproduce the form that won them the title in 2008 but they came strongly towards the end to finish third. Coach Jan Jonsson stays on and he was happy to see Veigar Pal Gunnarson return from a dismal stay in French football with Nancy. Central defender Kristian Onstad has joined from Esbjerg of Denmark, having been on loan at Brann last term.

Stabaek will miss influential players like Fredrik Berglund, Daigo Kobayashi, Pontus Segerstrom and Thomas Rogne and the squad seems weaker. However, Mikkel Diskerud should blossom.

Molde were runners-up last season and are expected to be in the frame again. However, it remains to be seen how much they will miss Senegal striker Mame Biram Diouf, who signed for Manchester United.

It was a blow to lose the Cup Final to neighbours Aalesund at the close of last season, but Kjell Jonevret has added newcomers Magne Simonsen (Lyn), Emil Johansson (Hammarby) and Baye Djiby Fall (Lokomotiv Moscow).

Odd Grenland were the surprise of last season, finishing fourth, but it will be difficult for them to do it again. Head coach Dag Fagermo does have a fine blend of experienced players, though, augmented by newcomers Magnus Myklebust (Lillestrom) and Jone Samuelsen (Viking).

Brann and **Valerenga** are both determined to improve on last season. Brann do not have the economic strength to buy new top players but made a shrewd move to bring back Erik Mjelde, a goalscoring midfielder who has enjoyed success with Sandefjord.

Set to flower...Stabaek's Diskerud (left)

Central defence might be Brann's Achilles heel as both Kristian Onstad (Stabaek) and Kristjan Sigurdsson (Honefess) have left. Yaw Ihle Amankwah might get the chance to partner veteran Olafur Bjarnson and Brann will have to hope for an injury-free season for veteran Eirik Bakke and midfielders Petter Vaagan Moen and Jan Gunnar Solli. Erik Huseklepp and Diego Guastavino should provide the goals for a title push.

Valerenga have replaced keeper Troy Perkins, who has joined DC United in the USA, with Lars Hirschfeld (Energie Cottbus) but coach Martin Andresen, who himself has hung up his boots, more or less relies on last season's squad.

Viking and **Lillestrom** are clubs with solid traditions who are expected to do better this term. Lillestrom coach Henning Berg has brought in Tarik Elyounoussi on loan from Heerenveen, Erling Knudtzon from Lyn and Nigerian forward Anthony Ujah.

Hamren's decision to take the Sweden job caused huge disappointment at Rosenborg but he will stay on until a successor is found

Former national coach Age Hareide, now at Viking, has picked up Patrik Ingelsten from Heerenveen and goalkeeper Boy Waterman on loan from AZ Alkmaar. Whether they will be good enough replacements for Jone Samuelsen, Thomas Pereira, Peter Ijeh and Thomas Myhre remains to be seen.

Start, Tromso and Aalesund were average in 2009 although Aalesund finished on a high with the domestic Cup. Kjetil Rekdal will build on the same group of players but has recruited Magnus Sylling Olsen from Kongsvinger.

Tromso have sold Tore Reginiussen (to Schalke) and Morten Moldskred (to Rosenborg), and coach Per Hogmo's team will do well to finish in the top half. Australian defender Jade North might prove to be a good signing, though.

Start coach Knut Torum will work with the same squad this season. Much is expected of Mads Stokkelien and there are numerous youngsters coming through the ranks.

Stromsgodset, who are expected to be involved in a relegation battle again, have signed goalkeeper Lars Stubhaug from Everton, while Jo Inge Berget should form an efficient partnership with Marcus Pedersen up front to provide the goals.

Promoted **Haugesund**, **Honefoss** and **Kongsvinger** will find it hard to survive in the top flight, though Honefoss coach Ole Bjorn Sundgot has made some shrewd signings in Paul Obiefule (Lyn), Kristjan Sigurdsson (Brann) and Rune Bolseth (Sogndal).

Sigurd Odegaard

For fixtures go to:
www.worldsoccer.com/fixtures/norway

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PREMIER LEAGUE 2010

KEY DATES

Season Starts
March 5, 2010
Season ends
October 29, 2010
Promotion/relegation play-offs
November 2, 5 and 8, 2010

Almost gone...Bohs coach Fenlon nearly joined Scottish Premier League side Dundee United during the close season

ONCE again the title looks like being a two-horse race between Dublin rivals Bohemians and Shamrock Rovers.

Pat Fenlon is still in charge of **Bohemians**, who will be bidding to make it three championship wins in a row. For a while during the close season it looked like he was on his way to Dundee United in Scotland, but the clubs couldn't agree compensation so Fenlon is staying at Dalymount Park, for now.

Bohs have lost highly rated goalkeeper Brian Murphy to Ipswich Town, but Fenlon has recruited another Murphy, Barry Murphy from Shamrock Rovers, for the No1 shirt. Also joining the Gypsies are Mark Quigley from St Patrick's Athletic and Derry City pair Steven Gray and Gareth McGlynn.

Moving to their new Tallaght Stadium home seems to have made a huge difference to **Shamrock Rovers**. The Hoops kept the pressure on Bohs right up until the penultimate game of last season and they have sold over 2,000 season tickets for the new campaign. Rovers manager Michael O'Neill, the former Northern Ireland midfielder, has snapped up Dan Murray and Danny Murphy, who were able to leave Cork City when their wages were not paid.

Last season was a special one for **Sporting Fingal**. They won promotion to the Premier Division in only their second season in the league and beat Sligo Rovers to win the Irish Cup for the first time. Fingal are managed by former Republic of Ireland striker Liam Buckley, who has strengthened his squad by bringing in ex-Republic international Glen Crowe from Bohemians and Ronan Finn, who was named first division player of the year with UCD last season.

St Patrick's Athletic have lost nearly all of their squad and will have a completely new look this season. However, manager Pete Mahon, who took over at Pat's from Jeff Kenna, knows the domestic scene well and Pat's will be difficult to beat.

Liverpool-born Paul Cook has done well as **Sligo Rovers** manager, taking them to the Cup Final last year and into the Europa League. However, they will have to do without midfielder Romuald Boco this term as the Benin international agreed to join English fourth-tier side Burton Albion after his contract expired.

Galway United and **Dundalk** have swopped managers, with Sean Connor, who did reasonably well with Dundalk last season, moving to the west of Ireland, while Ian Foster, who was originally assistant to Jeff Kenna in Galway, taking charge of Dundalk.

Drogheda United only avoided automatic relegation last season as a result of Derry City's expulsion from the league and manager Alan Mathews, who has lost several players during the close season, will once again have to work with a tight budget.

After losing to Sporting Fingal in the play-off last season, **Bray Wanderers** should have been relegated, but the financial collapse of Cork City earned Eddie Gormley's side a reprieve.

Meanwhile, **UCD**, who won the First Division last season, are no strangers to the top flight, but survival may prove difficult for manager Martin Russell and his scholarship players.

Relegated Derry City will be favourites to come straight back up and, after just missing out on promotion in the past two seasons, Shelbourne will also be hoping to make it third time lucky.

Sean Crendon

Moving to their new Tallaght Stadium home seems to have made a huge difference to Shamrock Rovers

Cup glory...Sporting Fingal celebrate beating Sligo last season

www.inpho.ie

For fixtures go to
www.worldsoccer.com/fixtures/Ireland

RUSSIA
PREMIER LEAGUE 2010

KEY DATES

Season starts
March 12, 2010
Mid-season break
May 15, 2010 to July 6, 2010
Season ends
November 27, 2010

THE new season was thrown into confusion before a ball had even been kicked when FC Moscow folded in February after their owners, metal giants Norilsk Nickel, stopped funding them.

Despite 11 fans going on hunger strike, the club were expelled from the Premier League and their place in the top flight will now be taken by Alania Vladikavkaz, who were champions in 1995. However, there are some who believe a conspiracy is at work as former Norilsk Nickel chairman Alexander Khloponin has recently been appointed government envoy to the troubled region in which Alania Vladikavkaz are based, and the football club's promotion to the Premier League will have helped bolster his position.

Meanwhile, **Rubin Kazan** – the first non-Moscow club to successfully defend the league title – go looking for the hat-trick this season. Kurban Berdyev's squad has been reinforced by the signing of Zenit's Fatih Tekke and the Turkey international will team up in attack with Russia front man Aleksandr Bukharov, who was Rubin's top scorer last year. Tekke replaces Alejandro Dominguez, the Argentinian who was voted the league's best player last year but who has joined Valencia in Spain.

Nine-times champions **Spartak Moscow**, who have finished one place short of a 10th title fourth times in the last five years, will be pinning their hopes on the Brazilian duo of Welliton, who was the league's top scorer last term, and Alex, who set up most of them.

Spartak manager Valeri Karpin combines his coaching post with that of director general and he is doing his best to promote local talent. Last season he gave a number of youngsters their chance after the team made a poor start to the season and they are expected to challenge again this time around.

Zenit St Petersburg started 2010 with a new foreign coach in Luciano Spalletti. Formerly with Roma, the Italian signed a three-year deal with Russia's richest club and replaced interim coach Anatoli Davydov, who led Zenit to third place.

Backed by the powerful Gazprom company, Zenit's new signings this season include Russia striker Aleksandr Kerzhakov, who returned to his native city after spells with Sevilla and Dynamo Moscow, and Yuri Zhevnov, the Belarus goalkeeper formerly with FC Moscow.

Rubin Kazan, the first non-Moscow club to successfully defend the league title, go looking for a hat-trick this season

Job hunting...Zvonimir Vukic (right) was one of many FC Moscow players left looking for a new employer following the club's demise

Back home...Zenit's Aleksandr Kerzhakov

Four more FC Moscow players, including Russia midfielder Aleksei Rebko, have joined **Dynamo Moscow**, whose new owners, VTB Foreign Trade Bank, have made no secret of their ambition to win the title. It is 35 years since the once mighty white-and-blues were champions.

Another Russia international, Igor Semshov, returned to the club after a year with Zenit, and Dynamo's young manager Andrey Kobelev will use him as a playmaker alongside veteran Dmitri Khokhlov. The team's attack will be spearheaded by Ukraine's Andriy Voronin, who joined Dynamo on a three-year contract from Liverpool.

Although **Lokomotiv Moscow** failed in a bid to sign their former attacking midfielder Marat Izmailov from Sporting Lisbon and Tottenham Hotspur striker Roman Pavlyuchenko, many view the railway team as major contestants for the title. The club's long-time coach Yuri Semin, who returned last season from Dynamo Kyiv, has a number of aces up his sleeve, including talented Kyiv midfielder Oleksandr Aliyev and ex-FC Moscow playmaker Dmitri Tarasov.

Three-times champions **CSKA Moscow** are another likely contender under their talented young manager Leonid Slutsky. Once dubbed "the Russian Mourinho" he joined the army team from Krylia Sovetov late last season and took CSKA to the Champions League play-offs.

Twenty-four-year-old goalkeeper

Igor Akinfeev, who is entering his eighth season with the club, remains the team's captain and their defensive linchpin. Meanwhile, new signing Keisuke Honda has already shown during pre-season matches that he can rule the midfield.

In the meantime, Slutsky's former club **Krylia Sovetov** found themselves in dire straits and they almost followed in the footsteps of FC Moscow before being rescued by a group of Samara-based businesses, who stepped in and acted on the "strong advice" of government officials.

After finishing seventh last year under the clever guidance of promising local coach Andrei Gordeyev, **Saturn** were not overly busy during the transfer market, though the inspired signing of charismatic veteran winger Denis Boyarintsev from Spartak Moscow may add to the team's spirit and attacking potential.

Survival will be the name of the game for **Rostov** – who are now led by former USSR and Ukraine striker Oleh

Long-term Loko...coach Semin

Protasov – along with **Amkar Perm**, **Spartak Nalchik**, **Terek Grozny** and **Tom Tomsk**, plus the three clubs promoted from the First Division: **Alania Vladikavkaz**, **Anzhi Makhachkala**, who are returning to the Premier League after an eight-year absence, and newcomers **Sibir Novosibirsk**, who have signed Poland keeper Wojciech Kowalewski, formerly of Spartak Moscow.

Victor Gusev

For fixtures go to:
www.worldsoccer.com/fixtures/russia

ESTONIA
MEISTRILIIGA 2010

On standby...Martin Kaalma has announced his retirement but will still play if Levadia need him

KEY DATES

Season starts:
March 9, 2010
Season ends:
November 6, 2010

CAN anyone stop the hegemony of Levadia Tallinn? Every year the question becomes more and more acute, with the team from the capital having won five of the last six titles, despite the best efforts of their rivals. Last term, eventual runners-up Sillamae Kalev finished 21 points behind the champions.

As usual during the winter break, **Levadia** have lost some important players, with 21-year-old midfielder Sander Puri, who joined Larissa in January, becoming the first Estonian in the Greek Super League. At the same time, defender Tihhon Sisov joined Azerbaijan team Khazar Lankaran while forward Indrek Zelinski and goalkeeper Martin Kaalma, both former Estonia internationals, ended their career.

The biggest problem for the title-holders is going to be finding a decent replacement for Kaalma, who is now goalkeeping coach at the club. If they are unable to do so, however, he has announced he will come out of retirement to help out.

Levadia's city rivals **Flora** have made some important changes in their management structure. After more than a decade in England, former Derby County and Arsenal keeper Mart Poom has returned to his old club as director of sport. The club have also replaced coach Tarmo Ruutli with another former player, Martin Reim. The 38-year already has his own football school in Tallinn. Flora president Aivar Pohlak says he believes "Poom and Reim are the perfect men to restore Flora's power". The last of Flora's seven league titles was back in 2003.

Like Levadia, Flora have also lost some key players. Goalkeeper Mihkel Aksalu has followed in Poom's footsteps by going to England, where he has joined Sheffield United, forward Vjatseslav Zahovaiko moved to Portuguese club Leiria, while defender Tonis Vanna and midfielder Martin Vunk start the new season in the Swedish second tier with Syrianska. Again like Levadia, Flora have strengthened mostly with players from their own youth system.

Reim is not the only new big name to take his place on the coaching bench, with former national team midfielder Marko Kristal being given his first coaching role at **Tammeka Tartu**.

And at the invitation of local Russian businessmen, Russian coach Vladimir Kazachyonok has taken charge at last year's surprise runners-up **Sillamae Kalev**. The 57-year-old former Soviet Union international, who has coached several Russian sides, says he wants to help Sillamae win their first championship and has not ruled out the possibility of returning to Zenit St Petersburg – where he was previously coaching their now defunct feeder team – to bring in some new faces.

Nomme Kalju, who were fancied to make a title push last season but could only finish fifth, have strengthened their team, signing two players from Brazil and Portugal, and one from Mexico and Japan. Both Brazilians have Italian passports, which is important because the league only allows for four players without EU passports to be registered and only three can be used in any one game.

Narva Trans, who finished third last year, will be hoping for more of the same, as will **Kuressaare** and **Tulevik**.

Having only stayed up last term after beating Warrior in a promotion/relegation play-off, **Paide LM** will be looking for an improvement in this campaign. Meanwhile, **Lootus** are back in the top flight after an absence of five seasons. They only finished as runners-up in the Esiliiga last season, but went up rather than Levadia's reserve side, who finished top but were ineligible for promotion.

Andres Must

For fixtures go to:
www.worldsoccer.com/fixtures/estonia

SWEDEN
ALLSVENSKAN 2010

Big responsibility...Antonio Flavio

KEY DATES

Season kick-off
March 13, 2010
Season ends
November 6, 2010

FRESH from last year's league and cup double, and having beaten IFK Gothenburg 1-0 in the pre-season Super Cup, **AIK Solna** certainly have the self-belief, unity and match-winning talent to keep them at the top end of the table. But, as coach Mikael Stahre says, there is no room for complacency.

Every other side will be gunning for them this term and to make things even more problematic, two of their most influential players have moved on, with Argentinian striker Ivan Obolo heading back to his homeland to join Arsenal and Holland centre-back Jos Hooiveld jumping ship to Celtic for £2million.

To take up the slack up front, AIK are banking on star Brazilian forward Antonio Flavio doing the work of two front runners, while the club have high hopes that Walid Atta, a Swedish Under-21 central defender, will prove a more than able successor to Hooiveld.

AIK look especially strong in midfield, where veteran skipper Daniel Tjernstrom, Bojan Djordjic and bad boy Liberian playmaker Dulee Johnson are joined by new Uruguay enforcer Sebastian Eguren, who is a loan signing from Spanish outfit Villarreal. The latter's arrival has caused quite a stir in Stockholm as he once played for Hammarby in the capital and their fans are far from pleased that he has chosen to move to rivals AIK.

After finishing as runners-up last season, **IFK Gothenburg** have several good reasons to believe that they can go one step further, notably their excellent home record and the retention of key men such as attacker Tobias Hysen and Iceland centre-back Ragnar Sigurdsson.

The country's top scorer in 2009 with 18 goals, Hysen was linked with a number of Bundesliga clubs, while Sigurdsson was reportedly close to a move to the Premier League.

AIK Solna certainly have the self-belief, unity and match-winning talent to keep them at the top end of the table

Much more of a goalscoring threat than expected last term, IFK clearly have no intention of standing still in the firepower department, recruiting GAIS' young striker Par Ericsson. Fans at the Gamla Ullevi stadium must have found it hard to bear when young central defender Mattias Bjarsmyr and midfielder Pontus Wernbloom departed in the close season to Panathinaikos and AZ Alkmaar respectively.

Second in the 2008 championship race and third last season, **Elfsborg**'s chances of going all the way depend to a great extent on how much more coach Magnus Haglund can wring from his hard-core of thirtysomethings (playmaker Anders Svensson, stopper Teddy Lucic and full-back Mathias Floren). The club from Boras have to be more clinical, translating possession into goals and they need winger Amadou Jawo to be more consistent.

Kalmar, champions in 2008, have the patent for punching above their weight and, as they have done for the past few years, will rely on Samba-style in the attacking third. Diminutive Brazilian striker Danny Mendes was their leading marksman last term and he should be partnered in the current campaign by compatriot Jael, signed from Salvador outfit Bahia. Another new face is Congolese midfielder Yannick Bapupa, who has extensive Allsvenskan experience with Djurgarden, Atvidaberg and Gefle.

Staying put...Hysen

Since their last title in 2004, the much-crowned national footballing institution that is **Malmo** have slipped into the wilderness of mid-table and with the unevenness of the playing material at his disposal, it's hard to imagine coach Roland Nilsson transforming them into championship challengers, though a top-four spot is not out of the question. The Nigerian-Swedish front-line duo of Edward Ofere and Daniel Larsson represents a ray of hope, as does the leadership and incisive passing in midfield of Daniel Andersson. Greatly improved home form is a must: in 2009 they managed only four wins on their own patch.

Hacken and **Orebro** are talking up their chances of breaking into the top-four. The former think they have a winning goalscoring hand with Jonas Henriksson and Brazilian loanee Kayke Rodrigues from Flamengo. Orebro, sixth in 2009, boast the reinforced concrete defending of Michael "Iron Mike" Almeback and the nose for goal of the Danish striker Kim Olsen.

Despite the prize signing of battle-hardened Swedish international full-back Erik Edman from Wigan Athletic, the red-shirted **Helsingborg** could be destined for a season of under-achievement. The retirement of national goal-poaching icon Henrik Larsson leaves a hole impossible to fill, while brilliant young utility player Andreas Landgren was lured away by Udinese early this year.

GAIS will be counting on goals, goals and more goals from their Brazilian attacking midfielder Wanderson, who was on the score-sheet 18 times in 2009, making him the Allsvenskan's most prolific marksman last term along with Tobias Hysen. The Gothenburg side can only hope he has not been unsettled by on-off talk of a transfer to Holland.

Under resourceful coach Tom Prahl, who has led Malmo and Halmstad to the title, **Trelleborg** have more than tactical wherewithal to entrench themselves in mid-table. As for **Gefle** and **Brommapojkarna**, all that matters is survival and it may be a long, hard season for both. Gefle particularly need a productive season from new striker Mikael Dahlberg, a giant Sweden international bought from Djurgarden.

After dicing with relegation in 2009, ex-Allsvenskan champions **Halmstad** and **Djurgarden** will simply want to stay out of trouble. Halmstad have gone the Stateside recruitment route, bringing in midfielder Michael Thomas from San Jose Earthquakes and Ryan Miller, a defender from Swedish second-tier side Ljungskile.

New boys **Mjallby** and **Atvidaberg** may find the going tough. However, Mjallby did display commendable ambition in signing the ex-Sweden attacking midfielder Tobias Grahn from Danish club Randers.

Nick Bidwell

For fixtures go to
www.worldsoccer.com/fixtures/sweden

JAPAN J.LEAGUE 2010

KEY DATES

Season starts
March 6, 2010
Mid-season break
May 16, 2010 to July 17, 2010
Season ends
December 4, 2010

REIGNING champions **Kashima Antlers** kick off the new season looking for their fourth consecutive J.League title. Once again, Marquinhos and Shinzo Koroki spearhead their attack, but South Korea centre-back Lee Jung-soo from Kyoto Sanga and on-loan left-back Gilton, who was with Albirex Niigata last year, will bring stiffer competition to key defensive areas. The one big concern is on the left side of midfield, where Masashi Motoyama has a back injury, which means new signing Fellype Gabriel from Portuguesa of Brazil will be expected to produce from the start.

Kawasaki Frontale have finished second in three of the last four seasons and the pressure is on returning manager Tsutomu Takahata to prove they can go all the way. Frontale should be stronger moving the ball forward thanks to the arrival of 2002 and 2006 World Cup midfielder Junichi Inamoto from French club Rennes and talented left-back Takanobu Komiyama from Yokohama F.Marinos, with both serving the same eager attacking formation of Renatinho, Chong Tese, Juninho and Kengo Nakamura.

Likewise, **Gamba Osaka** will also continue using foreigners up front, with Japanese behind. Tomokazu Myojin and 2009's Asian player of the year Yasuhito Endo will anchor midfield, while the Brazilian duo Ze Carlos from Portuguesa and 19-year old Dodo from J.2 side Ehime join the competition for the two attacking roles alongside countrymen Lucas Severino and Pedro Junior, and South Korea's Cho Jae-jin.

Quietly confident...Kawasaki's Juninho (left) and Nakamura

Sanfrecce Hiroshima have secured Gamba Osaka striker Masato Yamazaki on loan, along with midfielder Satoru Yamagishi from Kawasaki and keeper Shusaku Nishikawa from Oita Trinita. The loss of Yosuke Kashiwagi to Urawa Reds will hurt, but Serbia-born manager Mihailo Petrovic, in charge since 2006, has a well-established squad. The key players include national-team striker Hisato Sato and Bulgaria's Ilian Stoyanov, who will be at the heart of the top flight's only remaining three-man back line.

Young manager Hiroshi Jofuku has already given **Tokyo** two of their best-ever seasons and they should be pushing for higher things this time. Ricardinho, on a one-year loan from Atletico Paranaense, adds bite to the attack and young Masato Morishige from Oita is a big signing in defence, where he can expect to play alongside three members of Japan's current national squad.

Urawa Red Diamonds have lost Japan defender Tulio Tanaka to Nagoya Grampus, but Kashiwagi is a great signing for the hole behind the strikers and the back line should also improve with the loan signings of recuperating Australia centre-back Matthew Spiranovic from Nurnberg and Burkina Faso left-back Wilfreid Sanou from Koln, who coach Volker Finke worked with in Germany at Freiburg.

In Shinji Okazaki and Frode Johnsen, **Shimizu S-Pulse** already boast two of the league's best strikers and they have now signed the city's most famous former schoolboy as well, with 2002 and 2006 World Cup midfielder Shinji Ono joining from Bochum. Eddy Bosnar is a good signing from JEF Chiba in defence. Former international striker Hisashi Kurosaki steps up from assistant coach at **Albirex Niigata**, but his squad looks weaker with the departure of Mitsuru Chiyotanda to Grampus, Toshihiro Matsushita to Tokyo and Gilton to Antlers. **Nagoya Grampus** have lost Maya Yoshida (Holland's VVV Venlo) and Milos Bajalica (released), but gained Mu Kanazaki (Oita) and Tulio (Urawa Reds) so they should be strong enough to bounce back this season.

Yokohama F.Marinos have signed Argentinian forward Pablo Bastianini from Boca Unidos, and are bringing back former club favourite Shunsuke Nakamura on loan from Espanyol but money is tight for their new boss, former Marinos and Japan striker Kazushi Kimura. **Jubilo Iwata** have released several aging stars – Hideto Suzuki (retired), Masashi Nakayama (Consadole Sapporo), and Takayuki Chano and Shinji Murai (both JEF Chiba) – but could do well with a team that includes four South Koreans, last season's top scorer Ryoichi Maeda and Japan full-back Yuichi Komano.

Kyoto Sanga have three new foreigners in South Korea full-back Kwak Tae-hwi from Chunnam Dragons and Brazilian duo Dutra, from Santo Andre, and Thiego, who is on loan from Gremio. **Omiya Ardija** have revamped their defence with Kazuhiro Murakami from Frontale, Yuki Fukaya from Oita, Shusuke Tsubouchi on loan from Vissel Kobe and Arata Sugiyama from J.2 side Ventforet Kofu. As well as Tsubouchi, **Vissel Kobe** have lost Kim Nam-il to Tom Tomsk of Russia and loanees Alan Bahia and Marcel, who have returned to Atletico Paranaense and Benfica respectively. However, they did acquire Popo from Gyeongnam of South Korea and Edmilson from Oita.

Montedio Yamagata did well to stay up in their first season in the top flight and have secured reinforcements such as Tomi Shimomura from JEF Chiba and Chikashi Masuda and Yuzo Tashiro on loan from Antlers in a bid for a repeat performance.

Last year's J.2 champions **Vegalta Sendai**, back in the top flight after a six-year absence, have good strikers in Takayuki Nakahara, Tomoyuki Hirase and Reinaldo, who has left Cruzeiro, while Fernandinho (Oita) and Yoshiaki Ota (Jubilo) will reinforce their midfield.

Cerezo Osaka finished runners-up to Vegalta and boast two of the national team's rising stars in Shinji Kagawa, J.2's top scorer with 27 goals last term, and Takashi Inui. Their manyimpressive new signings include Taikai Uemoto, Daisuke Takahashi and Hiroshi Kiyotake from Oita, Akihiro Ienaga on loan from Gamba, Teruyuki Moniwa (Tokyo), Ryuji Bando (Gamba Osaka), striker Adriano on loan from Internacional and midfielder Amaral (Vasco da Gama).

The third promoted club, **Shonan Bellmare**, return after 10 seasons in the second tier and have also made sweeping squad changes. But Hidetoshi Nakata's old club have no big names and Japan's 2008 Olympic manager Yasuharu Sorimachi may have a difficult season.

Mike Plastow

> Kawasaki Frontale have finished second in three of the last four seasons and the pressure is on manager Tsutomu Takahata

Asia's best...Endo of Gamba Osaka

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USA

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER 2010

Fire in his belly...Former El Salvador coach De los Cobos has taken charge of Chicago

KEY DATES

Season starts
March 25, 2010
Season ends
October 24, 2010
MLS Cup Final
November 21, 2010

EASTERN CONFERENCE

THE 15th season of MLS opens with a 16th team joining its ranks. New teams do not normally find it easy going in their first season, but **Philadelphia Union** hope to be inspired by Polish coach Piotr Nowak, who won the MLS Cup as a player with a first-year expansion team, Chicago Fire, in 1998.

Most of Union's players joined from MLS teams in the expansion draft, so they can call on plenty of experience in defenders Danny Califf and Shavar Thomas, midfielders Stefani Miglioranzi, Nick Zimmerman and Fred, plus forwards Alejandro Moreno and Sebastien Le Toux. Also in the squad are two promising youngsters in Shea Salinas and 17-year-old Jack McInerney.

An added boost for Union will be the unveiling in June of their 18,500-seater PPL Park in the suburb of Chester.

After bowing out of last season's play-offs with a home defeat by Real Salt Lake, Nowak's old club **Chicago Fire** dismissed coach Denis Hamlett. In a surprise move, they replaced him with Carlos De los Cobos, who gave up his job as national coach of El Salvador and brought in midfielder Julio Martinez on loan from Mexican club Leon.

The bad news, however, is that the inspirational Cuauhtemoc Blanco will not be returning. Fire have also lost USA striker Chris Rolfe, who has joined Aalborg in Denmark.

DC United underwent more changes than most during the close season. Coach Tom Soehn paid the price for a failure to make the play-offs for the past two seasons and he was replaced by Curt Onalfo, who himself was dismissed by Kansas City Wizards.

Onalfo has got rid of the club's two Brazilians, midfielder Fred and striker Luciano Emilio, along with Argentinian playmaker Christian Gomez, indicating an end to DC's long tradition of playing skilful football. That Onalfo prefers a more physical game is reflected in his signing of Australian target man Danny Allsopp. Other arrivals include midfielders Christian Castillo from El Salvador, Tiyiselani Shipalane from South Africa and Floribert N'Galula from Sparta Rotterdam in Holland.

The drastic change in style may well produce an inconsistent team, though stability is provided by veteran forward Jaime Moreno, who is now the league's longest-serving player.

Onalfo was replaced at **Kansas City Wizards** halfway through last season by Peter Vermes, who is in charge of a team that struggled last time out and had the third-poorest record during the 2009 MLS season.

For this campaign he will have to do without the services of former Argentina veteran Claudio Lopez, who has been the club's most influential player for the past two years, but with whom "terms could not be agreed". Coming in are Danish goalkeeper Jimmy Nielsen, 23-year-old defender Pablo Escobar from Colombia and Stephane Auvray, a midfielder from Guadeloupe with 14 years experience with lower-division clubs in France.

At least the Wizards' ongoing problems in finding a ground seem to be over after an agreement with the local authorities was announced in January to build an 18,000-capacity football specific stadium, in the city's metropolitan area, to be completed in 2012.

Columbus Crew, the 2008 MLS champions, had a good regular season last term with the best record in the league, but the play-offs quickly brought disaster with a first-round exit to eventual champions Real Salt Lake.

But panic has not set in and Crew remain virtually unchanged, with coach Robert Warzycha still in charge. The only signings of any note have been Colombian forward Sergio Herrera as a replacement for Alejandro Moreno, who was taken by Philadelphia Union in the expansion draft, and midfielder Stanley Nyazamba from Zimbabwe. The inspirational Guillermo Barros Schelotto is still around and the solid Crew will surely be a title contender.

New England Revolution coach Steve Nicol is one of the league's most successful of all time and two more wins will make him only the third 100-game winner in MLS history. Yet, despite leading the Revs to four finals, he has still never won the championship.

Assistant coach Paul Mariner is now in charge at Plymouth Argyle in England, veteran Steve Ralston has gone following a contract dispute and defender Jay Heaps has retired, while defender Chris Albright and midfielder Jeff Larentowicz have been transferred.

Senegalese midfielder Niouky Desire has arrived to join four other Africans – Kheli Dube (Zimbabwe), Kenny Mansally and Sainey Nyassi (both Gambia) and Emmanuel Osei (Ghana).

Just when it looked as though **New York Red Bulls'** history of ineptitude was a thing of the past, it all fell apart again. After coach Juan Carlos Osorio had taken the team to the dizzy heights of the MLS Cup Final for the first time in 2008, supporters' hopes were high for a repeat. Instead, the Bulls had their worst-ever season, finishing bottom and Osorio quit before the end of the campaign.

Incoming Swedish coach Hans Backe and Norwegian general manager Erik Soler have added a Scandinavian flavour, and Backe has ditched all the Latin players brought in by Osorio.

While rumours circulate that either Raul or Thierry Henry will be signed to partner Juan Pablo Angel, the biggest concrete news is that the long-awaited new stadium – the 25,000-seat Red Bull Arena – will be ready for the opening game of the campaign.

Toronto fans deserve an award as the most patient in MLS. For two seasons they have been turning up clad in their team's red shirts to pack the

Newcomers Philadelphia Union will hope to be inspired by coach Piotr Nowak, who won the MLS Cup with Chicago Fire in 1998

Part of the Union...McInerney (left)

20,000-capacity BMO field. But while the atmosphere has been tremendous, the team have been less so.

In three seasons they have yet to make the play-offs, finishing bottom of their division in 2007 and 2008, and rising only to fifth last season. Their three previous coaches were all British: Mo Johnston of Scotland in 2007 (he is now the club's director of soccer), England's John Carver in 2008 (who suddenly quit six games into the 2009 season), and his replacement, Chris Cummins, another Englishman.

This season Toronto take on a non-UK coach with the arrival of Preki, who spent three years in charge of Chivas USA. Having traded arguably their best player, Amado Guevara of Honduras, and signed Jacob Peterson and Ty Harden, both inexperienced Americans, their chances of improving on their record do not look good.

WESTERN CONFERENCE

OF the eight teams in last year's play-offs, eventual champions **Real Salt Lake** were the biggest surprise. Despite having the worst record of the eight, they outplayed all their opponents to take the title in a triumph for young coach Jason Kreis, who had only finished his MLS playing career two years earlier.

The linchpin of Real's success was Argentinian playmaker Javier Morales, but it says much for the rest of the team that when, after only 20 minutes, Morales was forced out of the Final – following a foul by David Beckham – the team still went on to win the title. His replacement in that game, 33-year-old Clint Mathis, who has since moved to beaten finalists LA Galaxy, is the only major loss from last season's squad, while Nelson Gonzalez, a 21-year-old midfielder, has been signed on loan from Argentinian club Quilmes.

When the 2009 season began, very few people considered Real a championship team. The situation is quite different this year and no one would be surprised at a repeat.

Mathis' stint at his new club began badly when he was injured in training but, as ever, all thoughts at **Los Angeles Galaxy** are focused on David Beckham. On loan at Milan, his season will start late – along with team-mate Landon Donovan, who is on loan at Everton, and it will be even later still if he is included in England's World Cup squad for South Africa.

Galaxy boss Bruce Arena produced a disciplined but unexciting team last year that drew 12 of their 30 games and reached the MLS Final and little would appear to have changed this time around. The arrival of three young Brazilians might help, but those hoping for some attacking flair are likely to be disappointed as two are defenders and one a midfielder.

Houston Dynamo, MLS champions in 2006 and 2007, have come up short in the past two seasons. Coach Dominic Kinnear will not find his side so highly fancied this year after the departure of two of his most influential players: Stuart Holden to Bolton Wanderers and Ricardo Clark to Eintracht Frankfurt.

The club have re-signed forward Brian Ching but he will miss games if, as expected, he is a member of USA's World Cup squad.

Dynamo's other main striker is their designated player, Luis Angel Landin of Mexico, but since joining last season he has suffered a string of injuries, which have greatly limited his playing time, and his continued presence at the club looks unlikely. Dynamo have never had many foreigners in their ranks and only four are listed for this campaign, with two of those being Canadians – including 42-year-old keeper Pat Onstad.

Late starters...Galaxy's Beckham (left) and Donovan hope to be involved in the World Cup

Currently playing in the University of Houston's stadium, Dynamo's stadium saga continues with plans to build their own home continually frustrated. The latest news is that the city of Houston is looking into the idea. It is a promising move, but no one is holding their breath.

Dallas achieved a strange sort of triumph last year by being the fourth-worst team in MLS and missing the play-offs – yet still managing to be the league's top scorers with 50 goals. While coach Schellas Hyndman has added little to his squad, he has released veteran midfielders Dave Van den Bergh and Andre Rocha. Both are skilful technicians, but neither is quick, and Hyndman has announced he is looking for speed. Their departure now makes midfield creativity the responsibility of Colombia's David Ferreira.

Dallas can claim to have one of the best youth academies in MLS and Hyndman will hope to bring in some youngsters, but the area where they most need help, in defence, requires a veteran presence.

Following the departure of Preki, **Chivas USA** appointed their first Mexican coach in Martin Vasquez. If nothing else, this will surely mean a change to a more Latin playing style. Such a move will be helped by the retirement of the decidedly non-Latin midfielder Jesse Marsch.

Vasquez has 10 Latins in his 24-man squad, only two of whom are Mexicans (including 41-year-old Claudio Suarez). With key midfielder Sacha Kljestan almost certain to be absent with USA during the World Cup, Vasquez needs to make major signings if his team are to achieve anything.

When Gary Smith, an Englishman with little coaching experience, took over at **Colorado Rapids** he said he wanted his team to play like Arsenal. He may have to wait a bit longer.

Although promising on paper, Rapids played below their potential last year, with results poor and the football hardly attractive. This term Smith has strengthened his defence with Oscar Murillo, Danny Earls and rugged Jeff Larentowicz from New England Revs, and they join Pablo Mastroeni, also known for his no-nonsense approach.

Strikers Omar Cummings and Conor Casey will hope to thrive off playmaker Mehdi Ballouchy, though Casey may be called up to play in the World Cup.

Having finished rock bottom in the Western Conference last season with a mere 30 points from its 30 games, **San Jose Earthquakes** can expect things to be better in 2010, even though coach Frank Yallop has made few alterations.

Yallop surprisingly chose not to protect promising youngster Shean Salinas, who was snapped up by Philadelphia Union. Incoming players are Brazilian forward Eduardo, 29, who has been playing in Switzerland for Basle, and Joey Gjertsen, an attacking midfielder. But until something is done about a defence that leaked 50 goals last season, Earthquakes' chances of even making the play-offs are remote.

With 30,000-plus crowds turning up to watch their home games, **Seattle Sounders** were an astonishing success story in their first year of MLS. Coach Sigi Schmid had his team not only winning, but winning with considerable style. Sounders games were never dull, thanks largely to Swedish midfielder Freddy Ljungberg and young Colombian goalscorer Fredy Montero.

With a virtually unchanged team for 2010, Schmid could take them further than the first round of the play-offs and they are potential title challengers.

Paul Gardner

For those in grabs:
www.worldsoccer.com/fixtures/usa

New challenge...Mathis (right) has left champions Real Salt Lake for LA Galaxy

Fan ban...Austria Wien

AUSTRIA

European ban

Austria Wien must play their next two European home games – one of which is deferred – behind closed doors after their Europa League group-stage game against Athletic Bilbao in December, which the Spanish visitors won 3-0, was marred by a pitch invasion and the throwing of fireworks and missiles.

BELGIUM

Standard slipping

Laszlo Bolonii has resigned as coach of under-performing champions Standard Liege.

Standard are 22 points behind league leaders and arch-rivals Anderlecht.

BULGARIA

Botev are kicked out

Botev Plovdiv have been expelled from the top flight for non-payment of debts and registering an insufficient number of players.

The club, who have been Bulgarian champions twice, will probably be relegated to the third division.

Lovech's 3-0 win over Lokomotiv Mezdra kept them four points clear of CSKA when the league resumed in February after a two-and-half-month winter break.

Top...Lovech's Plamen Nikolov

RESULTS

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st knockout round, 1st legs

Feb 16
Lyon (Fra) 1 (Makoun 47)
Real Madrid (Spa) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,327. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Lyon: Lloris - Reveillere, Cris, Boumsong, Cissokho, Pjanic (Kallstrom 78), Toulalan, Makoun, Govou, Lopez (Gonis 82), Delgado (Michel Bastos 89).
Real Madrid: Casillas - Arbeloa, Albiol, Sergio Ramos, Marcelo (Garay 46), Granero, Xabi Alonso, M Diarra, Kaka, Higuain (Benzema 64), Cristiano Ronaldo.

Feb 16
Milan (Ita) 2 (Ronaldinho 3, Seedorf 85)
Manchester United (Eng) 3 (Scholes 36, Rooney 66, 74)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 78,587. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Milan: Dida - Bonera, Nesta, Thiago Silva, Antonini (Favalli 38), Beckham (Seedorf 72), Pirlo, Ambrosini, Alexandre Pato, Huntelaar (Inzaghi 77), Ronaldinho.
Man Utd: Van der Sar - Rafael (Brown 90+3), Ferdinand, Evans, Evra, Scholes, Carrick, Nani (Valencia 65), Park, Fletcher, Rooney. *Sent off: Carrick 90+3min.*

Feb 17
Bayern Munich (Ger) 2 (Ribbery pen 45+3, Klose 65)
Fiorentina (Ita) 1 (Kroldrup 50)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 66,000. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Bayern: Butt - Lahm, Van Buyten (Contento 46), Demichelis, Badstuber, Schweinsteiger, Van Bommel, Robben, Ribery, Muller (Olic 65), Gomez (Klose 65).
Fiorentina: Frey - De Silvestri, Natali (Pasqual 85), Kroldrup, Gobbi, Montolivo (Donadel 63), Boloni, Marchionni, Vargas, Jovetic (Felipe 75), Gilardino. *Sent off: Gobbi 73min*

Feb 17
Porto (Por) 2 (Silvestre Varela 11, Falcao Garcia 51)
Arsenal (Eng) 1 (Campbell 18)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 40,717. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)
Porto: Helton - Fucile, Rolando, Bruno Alves, Pereira, Ruben Micael (Belluschi 85), Fernando, Raul Meireles (Tomas Costa 68), Silvestre Varela, Falcao Garcia, Hulk (Gonzalez 81).
Arsenal: Fabianski - Sagna, Campbell, Vermaelen, Clichy, Diaby, Denilson, Fabregas, Rosicky (Walcott 68), Nasri (Eboue 88), Bendtner (Vela 82).

Feb 23
Olympiakos (Gre) 0
Bordeaux (Fra) 1 (Ciani 45+2)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 29,773. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Torosidis, A Papadopoulos, Mellberg, Raul Bravo, Maresca, Ledesma (Zairi 64), Siolitidis, Liulis, Dabetic, Mitroglou (Derbyshire 78).
Bordeaux: Carrasso - Chalme, Ciani, Planus, Tremoulinas, Fernando, Sane, Plasil (Gourthan 83), Gourcuff, Wendel (Jussie 83), Chamakh.

Feb 23
Stuttgart (Ger) 1 (Cacau 25)
Barcelona (Spa) 1 (Ibrahimovic 52)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Stuttgart: Lehmann - Celozzi, Tasci, Delpierre, Molinaro, Trasch (Kuzmanovic 58), Khedira, Gebhart (Rudy 84), Hleb, Cacau, Pogrebnyak (Marica 64).
Barcelona: Valdes - Puyol, Marquez (Milito 58), Pique, Maxwell, Toure (Henry 52), Xavi, Busquets, Messi, Ibrahimovic, Iniesta.

Feb 24
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 1 (Gonzalez 66)
Sevilla (Spa) 1 (Negredo 25)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 28,600. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
CSKA: Akinfeev - A Berezutsky, Ignashevich, V Berezutsky, Schennikov, Aldonin, Semberas, Krasic, Honda (Mamaev 83), Gonzalez, Necid.
Sevilla: Palop - Stankevicius, Escude, Fazio, Fernando Navarro, Zokora, Romaric, Jesus Navas, Renato (Acosta 89), Adriano (Perotti 59), Negredo (Kanoute 76).

Feb 24
Internazionale (Ita) 2 (Milito 3, Cambiasso 55)
Chelsea (Eng) 1 (Kalou 51)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 78,971. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Inter: Julio Cesar - Maicon, Lucio, Samuel, Zanetti, Stankovic (Muntari 84), Cambiasso, Thiago Motta (Balotelli 58), Sneijder, Eto'o (Pandev 68), Milito.
Chelsea: Cech (Hilario 62) - Ivanovic, Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, Malouda, Ballack, Mikel, Lampard, Anelka, Kalou (Sturridge 78), Drogba.

EUROPA LEAGUE

1st knockout round

1st legs - Feb 16/18; 2nd legs - Feb 23/25
Ajax (Hol) v Juventus (Ita)
1-2, 0-0 (agg 1-2)
Athletic Bilbao (Spa) v Anderlecht (Blg)
1-1, 0-4 (agg 1-5)
Atletico Madrid (Spa) v Galatasaray (Tur)
1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2)
Club Brugge (Blg) v Valencia (Spa)
1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3)
Copenhagen (Den) v Marseille (Fra)
1-3, 1-3 (agg 2-6)
Everton (Eng) v Sporting Lisbon (Por)
2-1, 0-3 (agg 2-4)
Fulham (Eng) v Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
Hamburg (Ger) v PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
1-0, 2-3 (agg 3-3; Hamburg on away goals)
Hertha Berlin (Ger) v Benfica (Por)
1-1, 0-4 (agg 1-5)
Lille (Fra) v Fenerbahce (Tur)
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
Liverpool (Eng) v Unirea Urziceni (Rom)
1-0, 3-1 (agg 4-1)
Panathinaikos (Gre) v Roma (Ita)
3-2, 3-2 (agg 6-4)
Rubin Kazan (Rus) v Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr)
3-0, 0-0 (agg 3-0)
Standard Liege (Blg) v Salzburg (Aut)
3-2, 0-0 (agg 3-2)
Twente Enschede (Hol) v Werder Bremen (Ger)
1-0, 1-4 (agg 2-4)
Villarreal (Spa) v Wolfsburg (Ger)
2-2, 1-4 (agg 3-6)

AUSTRIA

Feb 12: LASK 4 Rapid 2.
Feb 13: Ried 1 Salzburg 2; Mattersburg 1 Wiener Neustadt 0; Austria Wien 4 Kapfenberger 3.
Feb 14: Austria Karnten 0 Sturm 3.
Feb 19: Wiener Neustadt 2 Rapid 2.
Feb 20: Sturm 4 Mattersburg 0; Kapfenberger 1 Ried 1; Austria Wien 4 Austria Karnten 1.
Feb 21: Salzburg 3 LASK 0.
Feb 26: Mattersburg 1 Austria Wien 1.
Feb 27: Ried 0 Wiener Neustadt 1; LASK 1 Sturm 2; Austria Karnten 0 Kapfenberger 1.
Feb 28: Rapid 0 Salzburg 1.

AUSTRIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg	22	14	6	2	43	18	48
Austria Wien	22	13	4	5	42	28	43
Rapid	22	12	6	4	48	25	42
Sturm	22	11	6	5	37	20	39
Ried	22	7	7	8	26	23	28
W Neustadt	22	8	4	10	36	39	28
Mattersburg	22	8	3	11	28	38	27
Kapfenberger	22	6	4	12	27	42	22
LASK	22	5	6	11	45	59	21
A Karnten	22	1	4	17	15	54	7

BELGIUM

Feb 2: Mechelen 1 Germinal Beerschot 0.
Feb 3: St Truiden 0 Westerlo 1; Anderlecht 3 Club Brugge 2.
Feb 4: Charleroi 2 Standard 3.
Feb 6: Anderlecht 1 St Truiden 2; Lokeren 2 Mechelen 1; Cercle Brugge 2 Roeselare 0; Westerlo 1 Germinal Beerschot 1.
Feb 7: Zulte Waregem 1 Club Brugge 1; Genk 1 Standard 0; Kortrijk 2 Charleroi 1.
Feb 13: Roeselare 0 Kortrijk 2.
Feb 14: Standard 1 Westerlo 0; Gent 1 Club Brugge 1.
Feb 18: Genk 3 Lokeren 1.
Feb 20: Zulte Waregem 1 Roeselare 1; Gent 0 St Truiden 1; Westerlo 4 Charleroi 0; Kortrijk 3 Cercle Brugge 1.
Feb 21: Club Brugge 2 Standard 1; Anderlecht 2 Mechelen 0.
Feb 26: Cercle Brugge 1 Charleroi 0; Roeselare 1 Genk 1.
Feb 28: Germinal Beerschot 1 Gent 1.
Feb 27: Lokeren 1 Westerlo 0; Cercle Brugge 1 Genk 0; Mechelen 1 Kortrijk 1.
Feb 28: St Truiden 1 Club Brugge 1; Charleroi 0 Zulte Waregem 0; Roeselare 1 Anderlecht 2.

BELGIUM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	25	19	3	3	54	20	60
Club Brugge	26	15	6	5	47	32	51
Gent	26	12	7	7	45	29	43
Kortrijk	26	11	6	7	35	28	41
St Truiden	26	11	6	9	32	32	39
Z Waregem	25	10	9	6	36	28	39
Standard	26	10	8	8	37	31	38
Germinal B	25	8	7	9	28	36	34
Mechelen	26	10	3	13	32	44	33
Genk	25	8	9	8	31	26	33
Cercle Brugge	25	9	5	11	37	37	32
Westerlo	26	7	7	12	26	33	28
Charleroi	25	4	8	13	23	40	20
Lokeren	24	5	3	16	20	39	18
Roeselare	26	4	5	17	29	57	17

Mouscron expelled from league because of financial problems; all results expunged

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Feb 27: Travnik 2 Velez 1; Modrica 0 Olimpik 1; Sloboda 3 Sarajevo 1; Borac 1 Laktasi 0; Rudar 0 Leotar 0; Zeljeznicar 4 Celik 1.
Feb 28: Slavija 3 Siroki Brijeg 2; Zrinjski 0 Zvijezda 1.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Borac	16	11	1	4	21	9	34
Siroki Brijeg	16	10	2	4	29	15	32
Zeljeznicar	16	8	4	4	23	14	28
Sarajevo	16	8	4	4	22	17	28
Velez	16	8	3	5	28	15	27
Zrinjski	16	7	4	5	23	20	25
Leotar	16	7	2	7	14	19	23
Olimpik	16	6	4	6	16	23	22
Travnik	16	6	3	7	23	23	21
Rudar	16	6	3	7	14	14	21
Modrica	16	6	3	7	24	26	21
Zvijezda	16	6	2	8	16	25	20
Slavija	16	5	4	7	17	19	19
Sloboda	16	5	2	9	13	24	17
Celik	16	4	3	9	15	21	15
Laktasi	16	2	2	12	13	29	8

BULGARIA

Feb 26: Lovech 3 Lokomotiv Mezdra 0.
Feb 27: Slavia 1 Sportist 0; Minyor 0 Pirin 1; Sliven 1 Montana 0; Botev 0 Levski 3 (awarded); CSKA 3 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2.
Feb 28: Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Beroe 0.
Mar 1: Cherno More 2 Chernomorets 0.

BULGARIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lovech	16	12	2	2	31	9	38
CSKA	16	10	4	2	27	10	34
Lok Sofia	16	9	4	3	27	17	31
Levski	16	8	2	5	32	16	29
Slavia	16	8	3	5	17	15	27
Chernomorets	16	8	3	5	23	16	27
Minyor	16	8	2	6	22	13	26
Pirin	16	7	4	5	15	13	25
Cherno More	16	7	4	5	21	14	25
Beroe	16	6	5	5	16	19	23
Sliven	16	5	2	9	14	22	17
Montana	16	4	5	7	14	20	17
Lok Mezdra	16	4	1	11	16	32	13
Sportist	16	3	2	11	11	27	11
Lok Plovdiv	16	2	3	11	15	36	9
Botev*	16	1	4	11	12	38	7

Botev expelled from league because of financial problems; all remaining games to be awarded 3-0 wins to their opponents

CZECH REPUBLIC

All change at the top

Jablonec jumped from fourth to first with a 3-0 win over Bohemians 1905. Petr Pavlik, David Lafata and Jan Kovarik were on target as Jablonec moved a point clear of Teplice, who have a game in hand.

Previous leaders Sparta Prague slipped up with a 1-1 draw at home to mid-table Pribram. Bony Wilfred had given the hosts a first-half lead, before substitute Tomas Wagner equalised.

ENGLAND

United's success on the road continues

Manchester United's Champions League victory at Milan set a new record of 16 successive away games in Europe without defeat.

Their 3-2 win ended a run of four straight defeats in the San Siro, during which they had failed to score a single goal. It was also the first time David Beckham, now on loan at Milan from LA Galaxy, had played against his former club.

And 45 months after he scored on his last Champions League appaearance for Arsenal – against Barcelona in the 2006 Final – Sol Campbell was on target again as Arsenal lost 2-1 away to Porto.

United's head boy...Wayne Rooney (in white) scores against Milan

CROATIA

Feb 25: Lokomotiva 2 Varteks 0.
Feb 26: Zagreb 1 Rijeka 1.
Feb 27: Istra 1 Medimurje 2; Dinamo 6 Sesvete 0; Karlovac 1 Osijek 0; Sibenik 1 Zadar 1; Cibalia 2 Inter 0.
Feb 28: Hajduk 5 Slaven 0.

CROATIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	13	3	2	57	10	42
Cibalia	18	10	6	2	28	8	36
Sibenik	18	10	4	4	19	18	34
Karlovac	18	9	5	4	20	12	32
Hajduk	18	9	4	5	28	13	31
Osijek	18	9	4	5	35	26	31
Slaven	18	8	5	5	30	31	29
Lokomotiva	18	9	1	8	23	23	28
Rijeka	18	6	6	6	29	27	24
Inter	18	6	2	10	24	26	20
Varteks	18	5	5	8	19	27	20
Medimurje	18	6	2	10	23	39	20
Zadar	18	5	4	9	15	28	19
Zagreb	18	4	3	11	25	36	15
Istra	18	3	4	11	16	33	13
Sesvete	18	1	4	13	17	48	7

CYPRUS

Feb 6: ENP 1 AEL 2; APOP 1 Omonia 3; Anorthosis 3 Doxa 0.
Feb 7: Ermis 1 Nea Salamina 1; Apollon 0 AEP 0; APOEL 5 Aris 0.
Feb 8: APEP 0 Ethnikos 3 (awarded).
Feb 13: Nea Salamina 3 Aris 2; Doxa 0 Apollon 1; AEL 2 Ermis 1; AEP 3 APOP 2.
Feb 14: Ethnikos 1 Anorthosis 3; Omonia 0 ENP 0.
Feb 15: APEP 1 APOEL 4.
Feb 17: Ermis 1 ENP 0.
Feb 26: APOP 2 Doxa 2; Apollon 3 Ethnikos 1; APOEL 0 Nea Salamina 0.
Feb 21: Aris 0 AEL 0; ENP 5 AEP 1; Ermis 1 Omonia 2.
Feb 22: Anorthosis 3 APEP 0.
Feb 24: Ethnikos 0 APOEL 0.
Feb 27: AEP 3 Ermis 1; Doxa 2 ENP 2; APEP 0 Apollon 4.
Feb 28: Anorthosis 0 APOEL 0; Omonia 2 Aris 1.
Mar 1: Ethnikos 3 APOP 1; AEL 3 Nea Salamina 1.

CYPRUS	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Omonia	23	16	5	2	44	20	53
APOEL	23	15	7	1	44	14	52
Anorthosis	23	16	4	3	41	16	52
Apollon	23	14	6	3	36	14	48
AEL	23	13	3	7	29	16	42
APOP	23	10	4	9	37	37	34
ENP	23	6	8	9	25	30	26
AEP	23	6	8	9	25	34	26
Ethnikos	23	7	5	11	21	30	26
Ermis	23	5	7	11	27	32	22
Doxa	23	5	7	11	23	35	22
Aris	23	3	6	14	24	46	15
Nea Salamina	23	1	8	14	18	42	11
APEP*	23	3	4	16	21	49	7

*6pts deducted because APEP players walked off the pitch during the home game against Ethnikos – forcing its abandonment – in protest at refereeing decisions

CZECH REPUBLIC

Feb 27: Sparta 1 Pribram 1; Brno 1 Slovan 0; Bohemians 0 Slavia 1.
Feb 28: Ceske Budejovice 0 Teplice 0; Jablonec 3 Bohemians 1905 0; Mlada Boleslav 0 Kladno 1; Olomouc 1 Slovacko 0.
Mar 1: Plzen 0 Ostrava 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jablonec	17	10	4	3	20	12	34
Teplice	16	9	6	1	29	16	33
Sparta	17	8	9	0	20	8	33
Ostrava	17	9	5	3	23	15	32
Slavia	17	7	6	4	22	14	27
Plzen	16	7	6	3	17	13	27
Olomouc	17	7	4	6	28	17	25
M Boleslav	17	7	4	6	28	22	25
Pribram	17	7	3	7	18	18	24
Liberec	17	6	2	9	18	23	20
Brno	17	5	5	7	14	22	20
Bohemians 1905	17	4	5	8	9	16	17
C Budejovice	17	3	6	8	13	21	15
Slovacko	17	4	2	11	14	24	14
Kladno	17	4	2	11	13	27	14
Bohemians	17	3	1	13	15	33	10

ENGLAND

Tuesday, February 2
Hull 1 (Mouyokolo 30)
Chelsea 1 (Drogba 42) Att: 24,957

Wednesday, February 3
Fulham 1 (Greening 74)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 21,934

Saturday, February 6
Bolton 0
Fulham 0 Att: 22,289

Burnley 2 (Nugent 14, Fox 55)
West Ham 1 (Ilan 81) Att: 21,001

Hull 2 (Altidore 31, Boateng 54)
Manchester City 1 (Adebayor 59) Att: 24,959

Liverpool 1 (Kuijt 55)
Everton 0 Att: 44,316

Manchester United 5 (Rooney 40, Vanden Borre og 45, Hughes og 59, Berbatov 62, Wilson og 69)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 74,684

Stoke 3 (Higginbotham 8, Sidibe 45, Etherington 67)
Blackburn 0 Att: 27,386

Sunderland 1 (Jones 64)
Wigan 1 (Diame 20) Att: 38,350

Tottenham 0
Aston Villa 0 Att: 35,899

Sunday, February 7
Birmingham 2 (Phillips 89, 85)
Wolverhampton 1 (Doyle 42) Att: 24,165

Chelsea 2 (Drogba 8, 23)
Arsenal 0 Att: 41,794

Tuesday, February 9
Fulham 3 (Murphy 23, Elm 31, Zamora 54)
Burnley 0 Att: 23,005

Manchester City 2 (Tevez pen 31, Adebayor 73)
Bolton 0 Att: 42,016

Portsmouth 1 (Dindane 90)
Sunderland 1 (Bent pen 12) Att: 16,242

ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines FEBRUARY 2010

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with the most votes make the overall team. For details of how ESM members voted this month, visit: **worldsoccer.com/esm11**

Turku return...Johansson

FINLAND

Johansson comes home

International striker Jonatan Johansson, who has been capped 101 times by his country, has rejoined Finnish side TPS – 14 years after leaving the club from Turku to play abroad for Flora, Rangers, Hibernian, Charlton Athletic, Norwich City, Malmo and St Johnstone.

"I had other options but, day after day, the prospect of returning to Finland and TPS felt better and better," said the 34-year-old.

FRANCE

Rennes upset odds then crash out of the Cup

Three days after ending Bordeaux's 15-game unbeaten run with a 4-2 victory at the Route de Lorient Stadium, Rennes came crashing back down to earth as they were beaten 1-0 by fourth-tier side Quevilly in the French Cup round of 16.

"You could give any explanation in the world and it would not be enough," Rennes coach Frederic Antonetti tried to explain.

Meanwhile, reigning League Cup holders Bordeaux will face Marseille in this year's Final at the Stade de France on March 27.

Giant-killers...Quevilly (in yellow)

Wigan 1 (Scharner 14)
Stoke 1 (Tunozy 74) Att: 16,033

Wednesday, February 10
Arsenal 1 (Diaby 72)
Liverpool 0 Att: 60,045

Aston Villa 1 (Cuellar 19)
Manchester United 1 (Collins og 23) Att: 42,788

Blackburn 1 (Mylhi og 16)
Hull 0 Att: 23,518

Everton 2 (Saha 33, 75)
Chelsea 1 (Malouda 17) Att: 38,411

West Ham 2 (Diamanti 45, Cole 67)
Birmingham 0 Att: 34,458

Wolverhampton 1 (Jones 27)
Tottenham 0 Att: 27,992

Tuesday, February 16
Stoke 1 (Whelan 72)
Manchester City 1 (Barry 85) Att: 26,778

Wednesday, February 17
Wigan 0
Bolton 0 Att: 18,089

Saturday, February 20
Arsenal 2 (Bendtner 27, Fabregas pen 90)
Sunderland 0 Att: 60,083

Everton 3 (Bilyaletdinov 19, Gosling 76, Rodwell 90)
Manchester United 1 (Berbatov 16) Att: 39,448

Portsmouth 1 (Piquionne 35)
Stoke 2 (Huth 50, Diao 90) Att: 17,208

West Ham 3 (Behrami 3, Cole 59, Faubert 90)
Hull 0 Att: 33,971

Wolverhampton 0
Chelsea 2 (Drogba 40, 67) Att: 28,978

Sunday, February 21
Aston Villa 5 (A Young 32, Downing 56, 58, Heskey 61, Agbonlahor 68)
Burnley 2 (S Fletcher 10, Paterson 90) Att: 38,709

Blackburn 3 (Kalinic 41, Roberts 73, Givet 84)
Bolton 0 Att: 23,888

Fulham 2 (Duff 59, Zamora 90)
Birmingham 1 (Baird og 3) Att: 21,758

Manchester City 0
Liverpool 0 Att: 47,203

Wigan 0
Tottenham 3 (Defoe 27, Pavlyuchenko 84, 90) Att: 18,165

Tuesday, February 23
Manchester United 3 (Rooney 38, 54, Owen 80)
West Ham 0 Att: 73,797

Saturday, February 27
Birmingham 1 (McFadden pen 45)
Wigan 0 Att: 23,921

Bolton 1 (Knight 45)
Wolverhampton 0 Att: 21,261

Burnley 1 (Paterson 31)
Portsmouth 2 (Piquionne 24, Yebda pen 75) Att: 19,714

Chelsea 2 (Lampard 42, pen 90)
Manchester City 4 (Tevez 45, pen 76, Bellamy 51, 87) Att: 41,814

Stoke 1 (Pugh 7)
Arsenal 3 (Bendtner 32, Fabregas pen 90, Vermaelen 90+2) Att: 27,011

Sunday, February 28
Liverpool 2 (Gerrard 19, Fernando Torres 43)
Blackburn 1 (Andrews pen 40) Att: 42,795

Sunderland 0
Fulham 0 Att: 46,192

Tottenham 2 (Pavlyuchenko 11, Modric 27)
Everton 1 (Yakubu 54) Att: 35,912

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	28	19	4	5	65	26	61
Man Utd	28	19	3	6	66	24	60
Arsenal	28	18	4	6	66	31	58
Tottenham	28	14	7	7	50	27	49
Man City	27	13	10	4	52	35	49
Liverpool	28	14	6	8	45	28	48
Aston Villa	26	12	9	5	37	21	45
Birmingham	27	11	7	9	26	28	40
Fulham	28	10	8	10	32	29	38
Everton	27	10	8	9	38	36	38
Stoke	27	8	10	9	27	32	34
Blackburn	28	9	7	12	30	45	34
West Ham	27	6	9	12	35	43	27
Sunderland	27	6	9	12	32	44	27
Bolton	27	6	8	13	30	49	26
Wigan	27	6	7	14	26	53	25
Wolves	27	5	6	15	21	45	24
Hull	27	5	6	16	25	54	24
Burnley	27	6	5	16	28	57	23
Portsmouth*	27	5	4	18	23	45	19

*Portsmouth due to have 9pts deducted for going into administration

LEADING GOALSCORERS
23 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)
19 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
16 Jermain Defoe (Tottenham)
15 Darren Bent (Sunderland)
15 Carlos Tevez (Manchester City)

FA CUP – last 32

Replays
Feb 2: Crystal Palace 3 Wolverhampton 1; Wigan 0 Notts County 2.
Feb 3: Leeds 1 Tottenham 3.

Last 16

Feb 13: Chelsea 4 Cardiff 1; Derby 1 Birmingham 2; Manchester City 1 Stoke 1; Reading 2 West Bromwich 2; Southampton 1 Portsmouth 4.
Feb 14: Bolton 1 Tottenham 1; Crystal Palace 2 Aston Villa 2; Fulham 4 Notts County 0.

Replays
Feb 24: Aston Villa 3 Crystal Palace 1; Stoke 3 Manchester City 1 (aet); Tottenham 4 Bolton 0; West Bromwich 2 Reading 3 (aet).

LEAGUE CUP – Final

Feb 28 - Wembley
Aston Villa 1 (Milner pen 5)
Manchester United 2 (Owen 12, Rooney 74)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 88,596. **Ref:** Dowd

FRANCE

Saturday, February 6
Boulogne 0
Montpellier 2 (Camara 27, Montano 90) Att: 11,900

Grenoble 5 (Ljuboja 8, Akrour 10, 42, Matsui 36, 53)
Auxerre 0 Att: 12,849

Lens 2 (Monnet-Paquet 36, Eduardo 49)
Le Mans 1 (Maiga 84) Att: 30,113

Nice 1 (Ben Saada 17)
Lille 1 (De Melo 75) Att: 7,123

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Lorient 3 (Nahirua pen 24, Gallieiro 26, Amalfitano 37) Att: 32,156

Rennes 4 (Marveaux 4, Briand pen 17, Bangoura 48, Gyan 78)
Bordeaux 2 (Gouffran 64, Wendel 89) Att: 28,008

Sochaux 1 (Dalmat 52)
Nancy 1 (Dia 32) Att: 11,057

Sunday, February 7
Marseille 5 (Gonzalez 33, Brandao 43, Cheyrou 53, Valbuena 77, Niang 90)
Valenciennes 1 (Sanchez 66) Att: 46,306

Saint-Etienne 3 (Matuidi 14, Bergessio 76, Riviere 90)
Monaco 0 Att: 23,241

Toulouse 0
Lyon 0 Att: 20,218

Saturday, February 13
Le Mans 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 7,318

Lille 3 (Obraniak 6, 43, Rami 11)
Boulogne 1 (Adefemi 28) Att: 14,827

Lyon 1 (Delgado 77)
Lens 0 Att: 33,239

Monaco 1 (Maazou 40)
Marseille 2 (Niang pen 37, N'koulou og 89) Att: 13,063

Montpellier 1 (Montano 28)
Grenoble 0 Att: 14,129

Nancy 0
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 15,650

Valenciennes 2 (Moter 51, Sebo 90)
Nice 1 (Remy 75) Att: 10,224

Sunday, February 14
Auxerre 1 (Jelen 42)
Rennes 0 Att: 8,689

Bordeaux 3 (Chamakh 13, Wendel 28, 79)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Sako 45) Att: 30,084

Lorient 1 (Gameiro 56)
Toulouse 1 (Brassen 78) Att: 14,216

Saturday, February 20
Boulogne 1 (Yatabare 72)
Le Mans 3 (Dossevi 30, Cerdan 33, Maiga 90) Att: 11,269

Grenoble 0
Valenciennes 1 (Sanchez 32) Att: 12,260

Lens 3 (Jemaa 31, Roudet 43, Bedimo pen 52)
Monaco 0 Att: 33,493

Nice 1 (Remy pen 57)
Lorient 0 Att: 7,105

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Rosenau pen 23)
Toulouse 0 Att: 32,544

Saint-Etienne 1 (Riviere 79)
Montpellier 0 Att: 24,117

Sunday, February 21
Marseille 3 (Niang 10, 34, 67)
Nancy 1 (Andre Luiz 13) Att: 47,875

Rennes 1 (Leroy 26)
Lille 2 (Frau 10, Aubameyang 89) Att: 20,196

Sochaux 0
Lyon 4 (Michel Bastos 5, 24, 26, Lopez 80) Att: 14,768

Saturday, February 27
Lorient 1 (Diarra 34)
Sochaux 0 Att: 13,081

Lyon 2 (Lopez 10, Apam og 90)
Nice 0 Att: 33,593

Monaco 1 (Maazou 41)
Boulogne 0 Att: 6,926

Montpellier 3 (Marveaux 25, 37, Camara 82)
Rennes 1 (Briand 76) Att: 15,726

Nancy 0
Grenoble 2 (Ravet 14, 78) Att: 14,676

Toulouse 1 (Dupuis 57)
Lens 0 Att: 14,626

Valenciennes 1 (Audel 77)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 12,197

Sunday, February 28
Lille 1 (Hazard 34)
Auxerre 2 (Contout 19, 72) Att: 14,717

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Marseille 3 (Ben Arfa 15, Gonzalez 55, Cheyrou 71) Att: 43,813

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bordeaux	24	16	3	5	41	19	51
Montpellier	26	16	3	7	36	27	51
Lyon	26	14	7	5	45	26	49
Marseille	25	14	6	5	46	27	48
Lille	26	14	5	7	40	27	47
Auxerre	25	13	6	6	24	21	45
Monaco	26	13	3	10	32	32	42
Valenciennes	26	12	5	9	39	36	41
Lorient	26	11	6	9	38	28	39
Rennes	26	10	7	9	35	27	37
Toulouse	26	10	7	9	27	20	37
PSG	26	9	6	11	34	30	33
Lens	26	9	6	11	25	30	33
Nancy	26	9	5	12	29	37	32
Sochaux	25	9	5	11	21	31	32
Saint-Etienne	26	7	5	14	18	32	26
Nice	26	7	5	14	25	42	26
Le Mans	25	5	5	15	23	38	20
Boulogne	26	3	7	16	17	46	16
Grenoble	26	3	4	19	19	44	13

GERMANY

Leverkusen's record

Despite Bayer Leverkusen setting a new Bundesliga record for the longest unbeaten start to a season with a 0-0 draw at home to Koln, they were still overtaken at the head of the table.

A Franck Ribery goal against Hamburg was enough to put Bayern Munich top for the first time – following a complete round of matches – in 652 days.

Ruud Van Nistelrooy opened his account for Hamburg earlier in the month with two goals in three minutes as a sub in the 3-1 win at Stuttgart.

On a roll...Bayer's Stefan Kiessling

GREECE

Pana win in Roma

Panathinaikos scored three times in a six-minute spell to win 3-2 away to Roma and progress to the Europa League round of 16.

Djibril Cisse (twice) and Sotiris Ninis were on target in Italy, with Cisse describing the 19-year-old Ninis as "the future of Greek football".

Panathinaikos remain top of the league after winning 2-0 away to Panionios, with two more goals from Cisse taking the France's striker's league tally for the season to 20.

Scorers...Ninis (left) and Cisse

LEADING GOALSCORERS

14	Mamadou Niang (Marseille)
13	Nene (Monaco)
11	Gervinho (Lille)
11	Lisandro Lopez (Lyon)
10	Pierre-Alain Frau (Lille)
10	Kevin Gameiro (Lorient)

FRENCH CUP – last 32 *(remaining games)*
Feb 3: Sochaux 3 Le Mans 2; Villefranche-sur-Saone 2 Saint-Etienne 2 (aet, Saint-Etienne 3-1 on pens).
Feb 10: Lens 3 Marseille 1; Toulouse 0 Brest 2.

Last 16
Feb 8: Beauvais 1 Sochaux 4; Boulogne 1 Guingamp 0; Quevilly 1 Rennes 0; Vesoul 0 Paris Saint-Germain 1.
Feb 10: Auxerre 4 Plabennec 0; Bordeaux 0 Monaco 2; Saint-Etienne 2 Vannes OC 0.
Feb 17: Lens 2 Brest 1 (aet).

GERMANY

Friday, February 5
Werder Bremen 2 (Marin 66, Pizarro 81)
Hertha Berlin 1 (Gekas 68) Att: 35,600

Saturday, February 6
Bochum 1 (Dedic 68)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Berdyyk 45) Att: 22,176

Freiburg 0
Schalke 0 Att: 24,000

1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Carlos Eduardo 35, Salihovic pen 40)
Hannover 1 (Kone 57) Att: 28,100

Koln 3 (Mohamad 31, Novakovic 75, Chihi 88)
Hamburg 3 (Jansen 2, Petric 36, pen 50) Att: 50,000

Nurnberg 1 (Bunjaku 66)
Stuttgart 2 (Gebhart 22, Hilbert 87) Att: 40,364

Wolfsburg 1 (Grafite 90)
Bayern Munich 3 (Robben 2, Van Buyten 26, Ribery 57) Att: 30,000

Sunday, February 7
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Hummels 17, Barrios 57)
Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Kohler 8, Jung 65, Meier 74) Att: 70,400

Mainz 1 (Svensson 42)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 20,300

Friday, February 12
Monchengladbach 2 (Colautti 27, Friend 74)
Nurnberg 1 (Bunjaku 47) Att: 34,297

Saturday, February 13
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Reinartz 48, Derdiyok 66)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 79) Att: 30,000

Bayern Munich 3 (Van Bommel 21, Robben 50, Gomez 65)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Zidan 5) Att: 69,000

Bochum 2 (Sestak 24, Dedic 76)
1899 Hoffenheim 1 (Ibisevic 64) Att: 17,104

Hannover 1 (Schulz 59)
Werder Bremen 5 (Niemeyer 11, Naldo 18, Andreasen og 26, Hunt 44, Pizarro 66) Att: 44,379

Hertha Berlin 1 (Raimos 51)
Mainz 1 (Bance 37) Att: 36,715

Stuttgart 1 (Trasch 55)
Hamburg 3 (Berg 23, Van Nistelrooy 75, 77) Att: 41,500

Sunday, February 14
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Kohler 40, Attintop 90)
Freiburg 1 (Cisse 25) Att: 34,900

Schalke 2 (Matip 45, Farfan 81)
Koln 0 Att: 61,673

Friday, February 19
1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Ibisevic 69, Carlos Eduardo pen 88)
Monchengladbach 2 (Daemis pen 31, Colautti 51) Att: 30,150

Saturday, February 20
Borussia Dortmund 4 (Subotic 43, Eggimann og 60, Haedo Valdez 77, Grosskreutz 88)
Hannover 1 (Kone 81) Att: 73,700

Hamburg 0
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 56,196

Koln 1 (Schorch 44)
Stuttgart 5 (Cacau 13, 31, 38, 74, Pogrebnyak 70) Att: 45,500

Mainz 0
Bochum 0 Att: 19,000

Nurnberg 1 (Gundogan 54)
Bayern Munich 1 (Muller 38) Att: 48,548

Sunday, February 21
Freiburg 0
Hertha Berlin 3 (Ramos 28, Cicero 35, 57) Att: 21,600

Werder Bremen 2 (Pizarro 34, Mertesacker 90)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Derdiyok 29, Kroos 57) Att: 37,500

Wolfsburg 2 (Grafite 71, 77)
Schalke 1 (Kuranyi 38) Att: 30,000

Friday, February 26
Schalke 2 (Howedes 66, Rakitic 83)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Nuri pen 47) Att: 61,673

Saturday, February 27
Bayer Leverkusen 0
Koln 0 Att: 30,210

Bochum 0
Nurnberg 0 Att: 24,780

Hertha Berlin 0
1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Ba 35, Ibisevic 90) Att: 37,391

Mainz 1 (Bance 45)
Werder Bremen 2 (Borowski 32, Prodl 50) Att: 20,300

Monchengladbach 1 (Brouwers 72)
Freiburg 1 (Cisse 58) Att: 40,419

Stuttgart 2 (Cacau 41, 45)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Kohler 39) Att: 41,000

Sunday, February 28
Bayern Munich 1 (Ribery 78)
Hamburg 0 Att: 69,000

Hannover 0
Wolfsburg 1 (Misimovic 78) Att: 34,312

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	24	15	7	2	50	20	52
B Leverkusen	24	13	11	0	50	20	50
Schalke	24	14	6	4	36	18	48
Hamburg	24	10	10	4	43	26	40
B Dortmund	24	11	6	7	36	32	39
Werder	24	10	8	6	45	29	38
E Frankfurt	24	9	8	7	31	32	35
Stuttgart	24	9	7	8	34	31	34
Hoffenheim	24	9	5	10	34	29	32
Mainz	24	8	8	8	27	32	32
Wolfsburg	24	8	7	9	41	45	31
M'gladbach	24	8	6	10	34	39	30
Bochum	24	6	9	9	25	38	27
Koln	24	6	8	10	21	31	26
Freiburg	24	5	5	14	22	45	20
Nurnberg	24	4	6	14	19	40	18
Hannover	24	4	5	15	25	46	17
Hertha Berlin	24	3	8	15	21	44	15

LEADING GOALSCORERS

13	Stefan Kiessling (Bayer Leverkusen)
12	Kevin Kuranyi (Schalke)
11	Lucas Barrios (Borussia Dortmund)
11	Albert Bunjaku (Nurnberg)
11	Eren Derdiyok (Bayer Leverkusen)

GERMAN CUP – quarter-finals
Feb 9: Werder Bremen 2 1899 Hoffenheim 1.
Feb 10: Augsburg 2 Koln 0; Bayern Munich 6 Greuther Furth 2; Osnabruck 0 Schalke 1.

GREECE

Feb 8: Kavala 1 Giannina 0; AEK 3 Xanthi 1.
Feb 7: Atromitos 1 Panionios 0; Ergotelis 4 Asteras 3; Aris 0 Panthrakikos 2; Iraklis 1 PAOK 1; Olympiakos 5 Levadiakos 1; Larisa 0 Panathinaikos 3.
Feb 13: Panthrakikos 1 AEK 2; Xanthi 0 Larisa 1; Giannina 0 PAOK 1.
Feb 14: Levadiakos 1 Atromitos 1; Panionios 0 Iraklis 0; Aris 2 Ergotelis 1; Panathinaikos 0 Kavala 2; Asteras 1 Olympiakos 3.
Feb 20: Iraklis 1 Levadiakos 1; Kavala 2 Xanthi 1;

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES
GOLDEN SHOE

UP TO AND INCLUDING FEBRUARY 28 GAMES

POS		TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Wayne Rooney	Manchester United (Eng)	23	2	46
2	Luis Suarez	Ajax (Hol)	26	1.5	39
3	Antonio Di Natale	Udinese (Ita)	19	2	38
	Didier Drogba	Chelsea (Eng)	19	2	38
5	Lionel Messi	Barcelona (Spa)	17	2	34
	David Villa	Valencia (Spa)	17	2	34
7	Jermain Defoe	Tottenham (Eng)	16	2	32
	Gonzalo Higuain	Real Madrid (Spa)	16	2	32
9	Kris Boyd	Rangers (Sco)	21	1.5	31.5
	Welliton	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	21	1.5	31.5
11	Darren Bent	Sunderland (Eng)	15	2	30
	Djibril Cisse	Panathinaikos (Gre)	20	1.5	30
	Kristaps Grebis	Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat)	30	1	30
	Diego Milito	Internazionale (Ita)	15	2	30
	Carlos Tevez	Manchester City (Eng)	15	2	30
16	Shlomi Arbeitman	Maccabi Haifa (Isr)	19	1.5	28.5
	Seydou Doumbia	Young Boys (Swi)	19	1.5	28.5
18	Mamadou Niang	Marseille (Fra)	14	2	28
19	Vitali Gussev	Levadia Tallinn (Est)	27	1	27
	Itay Shechter	Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr)	18	1.5	27
21	Cristiano Ronaldo	Real Madrid (Spa)	13	2	26
	Cesc Fabregas	Arsenal (Eng)	13	2	26
	Fernando Torres	Liverpool (Eng)	13	2	26
	Stefan Kiessling	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)	13	2	26
	Nene	Monaco (Fra)	13	2	26
	Louis Saha	Everton (Eng)	13	2	26

ISRAEL

Benado's new best

Already the country's most-capped player at senior and Under-21 levels, Beitar centre-back Arik Benado reached another milestone in his long career when the 36-year-old made his 535th league appearance, in the 0-0 draw with Bnei Yehuda, to set a new Israeli Premier League record.

Welcome back...Marino

ITALY

Sacked Marino returns to Udinese

Pasquale Marino, who was sacked by Udinese in December, is back in charge of the club after the dismissal of his replacement, Gianni de Biasi, following a 3-0 defeat at Genoa. "It's not that easy to get rid of me!" joked Marino.

Italian clubs regularly recall sacked managers because they often remain on the payroll if their contracts were not resolved and they are therefore a cheaper option than employing another coach.

PORTUGAL

League Cup clash

Benfica beat Lisbon rivals Sporting 4-1 in the semi-finals of the Portuguese League Cup. They will now meet Porto in the Final on March 20.

Celebrate...Benfica's David Luiz

Ergotelis 1 Olympiakos 1.
Feb 21: Atromitos 0 Asteras 0; Larisa 0 Panthrakikos 2; Giannina 2 Panionios 3; AEK 1 Aris 0; PAOK 2 Panathinaikos 1.
Feb 27: Asteras 0 Iraklis 4; AEK 1 Ergotelis 0; Xanthi 0 PAOK 3.
Feb 28: Panthrakikos 1 Kavala 3; Olympiakos 2 Atromitos 0; Aris 2 Larisa 0; Levadiakos 4 Giannina 1; Panionios 0 Panathinaikos 2.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	24	17	4	3	44	16	55
Olympiakos	24	16	5	3	40	14	53
PAOK	24	16	5	3	32	10	53
AEK	24	12	6	6	36	29	42
Aris	24	10	8	6	26	22	38
Kavala	24	10	6	8	25	20	36
Atromitos	24	8	7	9	27	27	31
Asteras	24	8	6	10	24	25	30
Ergotelis	24	7	8	9	26	30	29
Panionios	24	7	7	10	27	29	28
Iraklis	24	7	7	10	30	32	28
Xanthi	24	7	4	13	18	28	25
Levadiakos	24	6	6	12	25	36	24
Larisa	24	6	6	12	20	36	24
Giannina	24	5	6	13	22	38	21
Panthrakikos	24	3	3	18	18	40	12

HOLLAND

Feb 2: NAC 1 AZ 1; VW 3 Heerenveen 1.
Feb 3: PSV 2 Utrecht 1; Twente 2 Heracles 0; Gron'gen 2 Den Haag 0; Ajax 4 Roda 0; Sparta 1 Vitesse 1.
Feb 4: RKC 0 Feyenoord 1.
Feb 5: Willem II 1 NAC 2.
Feb 6: PSV 2 Den Haag 0; Roda JC 2 Sparta 1; Heerenveen 2 Utrecht 0; Heracles 4 Groningen 3.
Feb 7: RKC 0 NEC 1; Feyenoord 1 AZ 2; VW 2 Vitesse 0; Ajax 3 Twente 0.
Feb 12: NEC 4 NAC 2.
Feb 13: Vitesse 1 Twente 2; Heerenveen 0 Ajax 2; Den Haag 3 Willem II 0; AZ 2 Roda JC 0.
Feb 14: Utrecht 0 Feyenoord 0; Heracles 0 PSV 1; Sparta 2 VW 0; Groningen 2 RKC 1.
Feb 17: NEC 2 Willem II 1.
Feb 19: Roda JC 2 Heracles 1.
Feb 20: NAC 0 Utrecht 2; VW 3 AZ 3; RKC 1 Heerenveen 2; NEC 0 Groningen 2.
Feb 21: Feyenoord 2 Den Haag 2; Twente 1 Willem II 0; PSV 1 Sparta 1; Ajax 4 Vitesse 0.
Feb 26: Den Haag 1 Roda JC 2.
Feb 27: Heerenveen 1 Heracles 2; Vitesse 0 AZ 3; Willem II 2 VW 1.
Feb 28: Ajax 4 Utrecht 0; PSV 5 RKC 1; Groningen 2 Feyenoord 3; Twente 2 NEC 1; Sparta 2 NAC 2.

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	25	20	5	0	58	16	65
Twente	25	20	4	1	47	20	64
Ajax	25	18	4	3	73	17	58
Feyenoord	25	13	8	4	38	23	47
AZ	25	12	3	10	43	28	39
Heracles	25	12	3	10	34	35	39
Utrecht	25	9	9	7	26	26	36
NAC	25	9	7	9	35	39	34
Groningen	25	9	6	10	34	36	33
Roda JC	25	8	5	12	31	45	29
VW	25	6	10	9	35	37	28
NEC	25	7	7	11	30	42	28
Heerenveen	25	8	2	15	28	44	26
Sparta	25	6	7	12	26	42	25
Vitesse	25	6	5	14	25	45	23
Den Haag	25	5	7	13	26	44	22
Willem II	25	6	2	17	28	48	20
RKC	25	4	0	21	20	50	12

HUNGARY

Feb 26: Debrecen 3 Diosgyor 1.
Feb 27: Kaposvar 1 Honved 0; Fehervar 2 Kecskemet 0; MTK 0 Papa 0; Ferencvaros 2 Szombathely 1; Ujpest 0 Gyor 3.
Feb 28: Vasas 2 Nyiregyhaza 3.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fehervar	16	11	3	2	38	19	36
Debrecen	16	11	1	4	32	21	34
Gyor	16	8	5	3	21	10	29
Ujpest	16	9	2	5	25	21	29
Zalaegerszeg	15	8	2	5	29	24	26
MTK	16	7	5	4	28	18	26
Kaposvar	16	7	4	5	24	21	25
Papa	16	7	2	7	24	20	23
Paks	15	5	5	5	16	18	20
Ferencvaros	16	5	5	6	19	22	20
Vasas	16	6	1	9	25	39	19
Szombathely	16	4	3	9	22	32	15
Kecskemet	16	4	2	10	27	37	14
Honved	16	3	5	8	16	23	14
Nyiregyhaza	16	3	4	9	22	34	13
Diosgyor	16	3	3	10	19	26	12

ISRAEL

Feb 6: Maccabi Tel Aviv 2 Ra'anana 0; Maccabi Haifa 4 Be'er Sheva 1; Bnei Sakhnin 1 Acre 0; Ahi Nazareth 0 Ramat Gan 1; Netanya 2 Maccabi Petach Tikva 2; Bnei Yehuda 0 Beitar 0.
Feb 7: Hapoel Petach Tikva 2 Hapoel Haifa 2; Ashdod 0 Hapoel Tel Aviv 4.
Feb 13: Ramat Gan 1 Maccabi Tel Aviv 4, Be'er Sheva 2 Netanya 0; Maccabi Petach Tikva 1 Ashdod 1; Ra'anana 0 Bnei Sakhnin 1; Acre 0 Hapoel Petach Tikva 0; Hapoel Tel Aviv 4 Ahi Nazareth 0.
Feb 14: Beitar 0 Maccabi Haifa 3.
Feb 15: Hapoel Haifa 0 Bnei Yehuda 3.
Feb 20: Ashdod 5 Be'er Sheva 2; Bnei Yehuda 2 Acre 1; Hapoel Petach Tikva 2 Ra'anana 1; Ahi Nazareth 1 Maccabi Petach Tikva 2; Hapoel Haifa 3 Beitar 2; Netanya 1 Maccabi Haifa 0.
Feb 21: Bnei Sakhnin 3 Ramat Gan 1.
Feb 22: Maccabi Tel Aviv 2 Hapoel Tel Aviv 4.
Feb 27: Beitar 3 Netanya 1; Be'er Sheva 2 Ahi Nazareth 2; Maccabi Petach Tikva 2 Maccabi Tel Aviv 1; Ra'anana 0 Bnei Yehuda 3; Acre 2 Hapoel Haifa 2.
Feb 28: Maccabi Haifa 1 Ashdod 0; Hapoel Tel Aviv 1 Bnei Sakhnin 0.
Mar 1: Ramat Gan 0 Hapoel Petach Tikva 0.

ISRAEL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maccabi Haifa	24	21	1	2	52	10	64
H Tel Aviv	24	16	7	1	60	18	55
M Tel Aviv	24	14	5	5	42	25	47
Bnei Yehuda	24	11	7	6	33	21	40
Ashdod	24	8	10	6	24	25	34
Beitar	24	9	6	9	33	32	33
Netanya	24	8	7	9	31	30	31
Be'er Sheva	24	8	7	9	35	46	31
M Petach Tikva	24	7	8	9	27	31	29
Bnei Sakhnin	24	7	8	9	18	22	29
Hapoel Haifa	24	7	5	12	31	37	26
H Petach Tikva	24	4	11	9	18	34	23
Ramat Gan	24	5	8	11	19	39	23
Acre	24	2	12	10	23	33	18
Ahi Nazareth	24	4	6	14	25	50	18
Ra'anana	24	3	6	13	21	43	17

ITALY

Saturday, February 6
Livorno 1 (Filippini 26)
Juventus 1 (Legrottaglie 42) Att: 14,867

Palermo 2 (Cavani 62, Simplicio 87)
Parma 1 (Biabiany 72) Att: 22,252

Sunday, February 7
Atalanta 1 (Tiribocchi 82)
Bari 0 Att: 12,708

Bologna 0
Milan 0 Att: 27,089

Fiorentina 0
Roma 1 (Vucinic 82) Att: 27,442

Genoa 1 (Rossi 63)
Chievo 0 Att: 24,877

Inter 3 (Pandev 6, Samuel 20, Milito 47)
Cagliari 0 Att: 57,079

Lazio 0
Catania 1 (Lopez 63) Att: 32,436

Siena 1 (Maccarone 82)
Sampdoria 2 (Gastaldello 3, Pozzi 77) Att: 10,853

Udinese 3 (Di Natale 7, 90+1, 90+3)
Napoli 1 (Maggio 21) Att: 20,084

Wednesday, February 10
Parma 1 (Bozhinov 54)
Inter 1 (Balotelli 58) Att: 20,128

Friday, February 12
Milan 3 (Ibarbebar 7, 57, Alexandre Pato 39)
Udinese 2 (Fiero Flores 45, Di Natale 86) Att: 33,837

Saturday, February 13
Roma 4 (Brighi 33, 62, Julio Baptista 53, Riise 83)
Palermo 1 (Miccoli pen 80) Att: 37,005

Sampdoria 2 (Semioli 16, Pazzini 40)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 23,485

Sunday, February 14
Cagliari 3 (Conti 13, Nene 29, Gazzi og 54)
Bari 1 (S Masiello 52) Att: 15,000

Catania 0
Atalanta 0 Att: 19,071

Chievo 0
Siena 1 (Reginaldo 75) Att: 7,741

Juventus 3 (Amauri 42, Del Piero 61, pen 78)
Genoa 2 (Rossi 16, 63) Att: 22,252

Livorno 0
Bologna 1 (Di Vaio 22) Att: 10,157

Napoli 0
Inter 0 Att: 56,211

Parma 0
Lazio 2 (Stendardo 68, Zarate 88) Att: 15,313

Saturday, February 20
Genoa 3 (Acquafresca 40, pen 53, Palacio 64)
Udinese 0 Att: 24,831

Inter 0
Sampdoria 0 Att: 40,000

Sunday, February 21
Atalanta 0
Chieva 1 (Pellissier 44) Att: 12,897

Bari 0
Milan 2 (Borriello 43, Alexandre Pato 69) Att: 51,943

Bologna 1 (Busce 50)
Juventus 2 (Diego 4, Candreva 66) Att: 25,759

Cagliari 2 (Zaccardo og 6, Matri 38)
Parma 0 Att: 15,000

Fiorentina 2 (Vargas 62, Gilardino 78)
Livorno 1 (Rivas 36) Att: 24,997

Palermo 3 (Hernandez 1, Miccoli pen 28, Nocerino 75)
Lazio 1 (Kolarov 78) Att: 23,104

Roma 1 (Vucinic 18)
Catania 0 Att: 30,449

Siena 0
Napoli 0 Att: 10,865

Wednesday, February 24
Fiorentina 1 (Gilardino 14)
Milan 2 (Huntelaar 81, Alexandre Pato 90) Att: 35,389

Udinese 2 (Sanchez 66, Di Natale 70)
Cagliari 1 (Jeda 2) Att: 14,922

Saturday, February 27
Catania 4 (Ricchiuti 4, Llama 40, Morimoto 81, Martinez 90)
Bari 0 Att: 19,000

Lazio 1 (Sivigilia 7)
Fiorentina 1 (Kuhnison 90) Att: 10,000

Sunday, February 28
Chievo 2 (De Paula 34, Granoche 78)
Cagliari 1 (Astori 51) Att: 8,678

Genoa 3 (Suazo 8, 37, Scuilli 18)
Bologna 4 (Busce 11, Adailton 32, 56, pen 79) Att: 25,295

Juventus 0
Palermo 2 (Miccoli 60, Budan 81) Att: 20,749

Livorno 1 (Lucarelli pen 10)
Siena 2 (Calaio 80, Maccarone 90) Att: 9,487

Milan 3 (Alexandre Pato 30, 41, Borriello 61)
Atalanta 1 (Valdes 56) Att: 38,688

Napoli 2 (Denis 75, Hamsik pen 90)
Roma 2 (Julio Baptista pen 58, Vucinic 66) Att: 50,832

Parma 1 (Zaccardo 54)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 18,789

Udinese 2 (Pepe 2, Di Natale pen 52)
Inter 3 (Balotelli 6, Maicon 21, Milito 45) Att: 23,874

ROMANIA

Levy's Urziceni make losing restart

Having been on a winter break since mid-December, the domestic season resumed with CFR winning 1-0 at Urziceni.

Lacina Traore scored the only goal of the game as new Urziceni coach Ronny Levy lost his second consecutive game, following his side's 1-0 defeat at Liverpool in the Europa League. The Israeli is still yet to win a game since taking over from Dan Petrescu.

SCOTLAND

European places cut

The Scottish Premier League will lose one of its two Champions League places from the season after next.

The 2010-11 champions will no longer automatically qualify for the following season's Champions League group stage. Instead, they must navigate three qualifying rounds, though these matches will all be against champions from smaller European nations rather than non-champions from larger countries.

In this season's title race, Rangers beat Celtic 1-0 in the Old Firm derby at Ibrox with a goal in the 92nd minute from Maurice Edu. Defending champions Rangers have a 10-point lead over their rivals, with a game in hand.

Derby winner...Edu (right)

SLOVAKIA

Malaysian team joins

Malaysia's national under-19 side have taken their place in the Slovakian second tier for the remainder of the season following the withdrawal of Sport Podbrezova. They will be based in Zlate Moravce, 75 miles from Bratislava.

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	26	17	7	2	52	22	58
Milan	26	16	6	4	46	26	54
Roma	26	15	6	5	45	29	51
Palermo	26	12	7	7	37	31	43
Juventus	26	12	5	9	40	35	41
Napoli	26	10	11	5	34	29	41
Sampdoria	26	11	7	8	32	32	40
Cagliari	26	11	5	10	41	34	38
Genoa	26	11	5	10	44	43	38
Fiorentina	26	10	5	11	32	31	35
Chievo	26	10	5	11	26	28	35
Parma	26	9	6	11	27	36	33
Bari	26	8	8	10	31	34	32
Bologna	26	8	7	11	30	36	31
Catania	26	6	9	11	27	31	27
Udinese	26	7	6	13	32	39	27
Lazio	26	5	11	10	21	28	26
Livorno	26	6	5	15	17	36	23
Atalanta	26	5	6	15	22	38	21
Siena	26	5	5	16	27	47	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS

19 Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
15 Diego Milito (Inter)
12 Alexandre Pato (Milan)
12 Giampaolo Pazzini (Sampdoria)

ITALIAN CUP – semi-finals

1st legs
Feb 3: Inter 1 Fiorentina 0.
Feb 4: Roma 2 Udinese 0.
2nd legs - April 14

MACEDONIA

Feb 27: Vardar 2 Milano 0.
Feb 28: Pobeda 0 Metalurg 1; Teteks 1 Pelister 2; Sileks 3 Turnovo 0.

MACEDONIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Renova	17	13	3	1	39	13	42
Rabotnicki	18	11	4	3	34	15	37
Metalurg	18	8	7	3	26	14	31
Sileks	18	7	5	6	25	23	26
Pelister	18	7	5	6	21	20	26
Turnovo	18	7	3	8	25	26	24
Pobeda*	17	6	4	7	20	25	19
Teteks	17	5	2	10	22	25	17
Vardar	17	4	4	9	19	25	16
Milano	18	1	0	17	8	63	3
Makedonija**	11	5	5	1	23	5	0
Slogo**	11	3	2	6	9	16	0

**2pts deducted for failing to respect league ruling*
***Makedonija and Slogo expelled after failing to fulfil consecutive fixtures; forfeited points gained*

MOLDOVA

Feb 27: Olimpia 1 Sheriff 0; S Gheorghe 0 Zimbru 1.

MOLDOVA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheriff	19	14	2	3	42	6	44
Dacia	19	13	3	3	36	13	42
Iskra-Stal	19	13	3	3	28	14	42
Olimpia	19	9	5	5	27	14	32
Zimbru	19	7	6	6	23	22	27
CSCA-Rapid	19	7	4	8	19	29	25
Tiraspol	19	5	7	7	14	17	22
Viitorul	19	6	4	9	15	25	22
Academia	19	5	6	8	19	26	21
Dinamo	19	5	2	12	22	41	17
S Gheorghe	19	4	2	13	16	31	14
Nistru	19	2	4	13	9	34	10

POLAND

Feb 26: Odra 0 Lechia 0; Cracovia 1 Legia 2.
Feb 27: Korona 1 Jagiellonia 0; Belchatow 1 Wisla 0; Polonia Bytom 0 Slask 0; Arka 0 Ruch 3.
Feb 28: Zaglebie 1 Piast 1; Polonia Warsaw 0 Lech 3.

POLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla	18	13	1	4	31	14	40
Legia	18	11	5	2	24	8	38
Lech	18	10	5	3	30	16	35
Ruch	18	11	2	5	26	16	35
Belchatow	18	9	4	5	21	15	31
Lechia	18	7	6	5	18	15	27
Polonia B	18	6	7	5	20	16	25
Slask	18	6	6	6	19	17	24
Cracovia	18	5	5	8	14	22	20
Korona	18	4	6	8	22	30	18
Piast	18	4	5	9	22	30	17
Jagiellonia*	18	6	8	4	20	17	16
Arka	18	3	6	9	14	21	15
Zaglebie	18	3	6	9	13	27	15
Polonia W	18	4	3	11	13	28	15
Odra	18	3	3	12	13	28	12

**10pts deducted for the club's involvement in a corruption scandal*

PORTUGAL

Feb 3: Benfica 3 Uniao Leiria 0.
Feb 6: Sporting Lisbon 1 Academica 2; Setubal 1 Benfica 1.
Feb 7: Olhanense 1 Nacional 0; Rio Ave 2 Leixoes 0; Maritimo 1 Uniao Leiria 0; Guimaraes 1 Pacos Ferreira 2; Porto 3 Naval 0.
Feb 8: Belenenses 1 Sporting Braga 3.
Feb 12: Pacos Ferreira 0 Sporting Lisbon 0.
Feb 13: Benfica 1 Belenenses 0; Leixoes 0 Porto 0.
Feb 14: Nacional 1 Rio Ave 1; Academica 1 Olhanense 1; Uniao Leiria 3 Setubal 3; Sporting Braga 2 Maritimo 1.
Feb 15: Naval 0 Guimaraes 0.
Feb 19: Maritimo 1 Nacional 1.
Feb 20: Guimaraes 2 Leixoes 0; Olhanense 0 Sporting Lisbon 0.
Feb 21: Setubal 0 Naval 1; Rio Ave 1 Pacos Ferreira 2; Porto 5 Sporting Braga 1.
Feb 22: Belenenses 1 Academica 2.
Feb 26: Uniao Leiria 0 Guimaraes 1.
Feb 27: Naval 2 Maritimo 1; Sporting Braga 3 Olhanense 1; Leixoes 0 Benfica 4.
Feb 28: Academica 0 Rio Ave 1; Pacos Ferreira 5 Setubal 3; Sporting Lisbon 3 Porto 0.

PORTUGAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica	21	16	4	1	56	11	52
S Braga	21	16	3	2	33	14	51
Porto	21	13	4	4	43	18	43
Sporting L	21	8	8	5	23	16	32
Guimaraes	21	8	6	7	21	22	30
P Ferreira	21	7	6	8	25	23	28
Rio Ave	21	6	9	6	20	19	27
Uniao Leiria	21	7	6	8	26	24	27
Maritimo	21	7	5	9	29	31	26
Nacional	20	7	5	8	26	26	26
Naval	21	7	4	10	13	24	25
Academica	21	6	5	10	26	31	23
Olhanense	21	3	10	8	16	28	19
Setubal	21	3	7	11	18	41	16
Leixoes	21	3	6	12	17	37	15
Belenenses	20	1	8	11	10	27	11

ROMANIA

Feb 19: Otelul 1 International 0.
Feb 20: Brasov 2 Alba Iulia 1; Gloria 0 Timisoara 0; Politehnica 2 Rapid 1; Steaua 1 Ceahlaul 3.
Feb 21: Gaz Metan 0 Vaslui 0; Pandurii 0 Astra 2; Dinamo 2 Universitatea 1.
Feb 22: Urziceni 0 CFR 1.
Feb 26: Alba Iulia 1 Gloria 2; Ceahlaul 0 Otelul 1; Timisoara 2 Politehnica 1.
Feb 27: Vaslui 2 Pandurii 1; Universitatea 1 Gaz Metan 2; International 1 Dinamo 3.
Feb 28: CFR 1 Steaua 1; Astra 2 Brasov 1; Rapid 1 Urziceni 1.

ROMANIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR	19	11	5	3	25	11	38
Timisoara	19	9	8	2	31	13	35
Urziceni	19	10	5	4	26	15	35
Steaua	19	10	5	4	27	18	35
Vaslui	19	10	4	5	27	20	34
Dinamo	19	9	6	4	24	14	33
Rapid	19	9	5	5	38	24	32
Brasov	19	8	6	5	22	14	30
Otelul	19	6	4	7	23	24	26
Gaz Metan	19	6	7	6	20	27	25
Astra	19	6	6	7	23	24	24
Politehnica	19	6	3	10	18	28	21
Pandurii	19	5	5	9	15	21	20
Gloria	19	3	9	7	15	25	18
Universitatea	19	5	2	12	26	31	17
International	19	5	1	13	17	35	16
Alba Iulia	19	3	5	11	19	31	14
Ceahlaul	19	3	4	12	16	37	13

SCOTLAND

Feb 2: Kilmarnock 1 Celtic 0; Aberdeen 0 Falkirk 1.
Feb 8: Motherwell 1 Hamilton 0.
Feb 10: Celtic 2 Hearts 0; Dundee United 0 Hamilton 2; Falkirk 0 Kilmarnock 1; Hibernian 2 Aberdeen 2; Motherwell 1 Rangers 1; St Mirren 1 St Johnstone 1.
Feb 13: Aberdeen 4 Celtic 4; Hamilton 0 Motherwell 0; Hearts 3 Falkirk 2; Kilmarnock 3 St Johnstone 2; St Mirren 1 Dundee United 2.
Feb 14: Rangers 3 Hibernian 0.
Feb 17: St Johnstone 5 Hibernian 1.
Feb 20: Celtic 1 Dundee United 0; Falkirk 3 Aberdeen 1; Kilmarnock 1 St Mirren 1; Motherwell 1 Hibernian 0.
Feb 21: Hearts 2 Hamilton 0.
Feb 27: Aberdeen 0 Hearts 1; Dundee United 3 Falkirk 0; Hibernian 1 St Johnstone 1; Motherwell 1 Kilmarnock 0; St Mirren 0 Hamilton 0.
Feb 28: Rangers 1 Celtic 0.

SCOTLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	26	18	7	1	59	15	61
Celtic	27	15	6	6	51	29	51
Dundee Utd	27	12	8	6	40	35	45
Hibernian	27	12	8	7	38	31	44
Motherwell	27	10	11	6	33	30	41
Hearts	27	10	7	10	26	29	37
Aberdeen	26	7	8	11	24	33	29
St Johnstone	24	7	7	10	38	43	28
Kilmarnock	27	6	8	13	22	35	26
St Mirren	26	5	8	13	24	36	23
Hamilton	26	5	7	14	18	37	22
Falkirk	26	4	8	14	22	43	20

SERBIA

Feb 27: Metalac 1 Napredak 0; Vojvodina 3 Hajduk 2; Javor 2 Cukaricki 2; Borac 0 Partizan 3; Mladi Radnik 2 BSK 0; Red Star 1 Jagodina 0; Smederevo 2 Rad 1.
Feb 28: OFK 0 Spartak 1.

SERBIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	16	14	1	1	36	6	43
Partizan	16	12	4	0	34	10	40
Vojvodina	16	8	3	5	24	12	27
Spartak	16	7	5	4	20	13	26
OFK	16	7	3	6	17	14	24
Smederevo	16	6	4	6	17	19	22
Jagodina	16	6	3	7	18	19	21
Javor	16	4	8	4	13	14	20
Mladi Radnik	16	4	7	5	12	18	19
Borac	16	6	1	9	13	22	19
Metalac	16	5	3	8	9	19	18
Hajduk	16	4	5	7	18	21	17
Napredak	16	4	4	8	14	20	16
BSK	16	4	4	8	11	20	16
Rad	16	3	8	7	15	21	15
Cukaricki	16	2	3	11	12	29	9

SLOVAKIA

Feb 27: Kosice 1 Petrzalka 0; Spartak 2 Tatran 0; Slovan 2 DAC 0; Nitra 0 Dukla 0; Zilina 4 Dubnica 0; Senica 2 Ruzomberok 1.

SLOVAKIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	20	14	2	4	31	9	44
Slovan	20	13	4	3	32	14	43
Dukla	20	11	7	2	28	13	40
Nitra	20	8	5	7	21	17	29
Senica	20	8	5	7	18	24	29
Spartak	20	8	4	8	29	23	28
Tatran	20	7	3	10	17	20	24
Ruzomberok	20	6	5	9	19	25	23
Petrzalka	20	6	4	10	22	24	22
DAC	20	5	7	8	18	23	22
Dubnica	20	4	5	11	13	30	17
Kosice	20	3	3	14	16	42	12

SLOVENIA

Feb 27: Domzale 2 Maribor 3; Drava 3 Interblock 1; Celje 1 Gorica 4; Koper 2 Rudar 1.
Feb 28: Olimpija 0 Nafta 0.

SLOVENIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Koper	23	13	7	3	35	22	46
Maribor	23	13	2	8	41	30	41
Nafta	23	10	5	8	35	35	35
Olimpija*	23	10	4	9	31	21	32
Rudar	23	10	2	11	30	34	32
Celje	23	8	6	9	34	38	30
Domzale	23	8	5	10	33	41	29
Gorica	23	7	6	10	38	38	27
Interblock	23	7	5	11	26	30	26
Drava	23	5	6	12	22	38	21

**2pts deducted for missing a game last season*

Beaten...Barca's Lio Messi (in yellow)

SPAIN

Barca beaten at last

A goal apiece from Diego Forlan and Simao ended Barcelona's unbeaten league record as Atletico Madrid won 2-1 at the Vicente Calderon stadium. Barca remain two points clear at the top of La Liga, ahead of Real Madrid, for whom Iker Casillas made his 500th appearance in the 3-0 win at Xerez.

TURKEY

Gala going strong

Galatasaray scored three times in the closing 15 minutes to beat Kasimpasa 4-1 and maintain their four-point cushion over Bursaspor at the top of the Super League.

Meanwhile, Fenerbahce slipped to five points behind their great city rivals after a shock 2-1 defeat away to Istanbul BB.

UKRAINE

Shakhtar hanging on

Shakhtar Donetsk bounced back from their Europa League exit at the hands of Fulham with a narrow 1-0 win over Vorskla. Brazilian midfielder Jadson scored the only goal on the stroke of half-time as Shakhtar – who have played a game more – moved to within two points of league leaders Dynamo Kyiv.

ARGENTINA

Holders record start

Estudiantes began their defence of the Libertadores Cup with a 5-1 win over Peru's Juan Aurich – their biggest-ever victory in the competition.

Mauro Boselli (three), German Re and Leandro Gonzalez scored for the holders, while Luis Tejada replied for the visitors.

Things also started well

SPAIN

Saturday, February 6
Barcelona 2 (Messi 7, Xavi 67)
Getafe 1 (Soldado pen 90) Att: 74,859

Real Madrid 3 (Sergio Ramos 5, Kaka 30, Higuain 90)
Espanyol 0 Att: 72,000

Valencia 2 (Banega 8, Villa 29)
Valladolid 0 Att: 50,000

Sunday, February 7
Almeria 3 (Crusat 15, Cisma 43, Guilherme 81)
Sporting Gijon 1 (Diego Castro pen 13) Att: 12,000

Athletic Bilbao 3 (Munain 2, Llorente 64, 86)
Xerez 2 (Moreno 10, Bermejo 41) Att: 36,000

Malaga 0
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 25,000

Mallorca 1 (Nunes 81)
Villarreal 0 Att: 12,000

Osasuna 1 (Aranda 46)
Tenerife 0 Att: 16,798

Racing Santander 1 (Colsa 36)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Forlan 24) Att: 15,430

Zaragoza 2 (Contini 31, Negredo og 41)
Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 34) Att: 23,000

Saturday, February 13
Sporting Gijon 1 (Diego Castro 5)
Valencia 1 (Mata 76) Att: 22,000

Villarreal 2 (Capdevila 5, Nilmar 45)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Gabilondo 24) Att: 12,000

Xerez 0
Real Madrid 3 (Arbeloa 64, Cristiano Ronaldo 69, 71) Att: 20,398

Sunday, February 14
Atletico Madrid 2 (Forlan 9, Simao 23)
Barcelona 1 (Ibrahimovic 27) Att: 53,000

Espanyol 2 (Verdu 38, Callejon 59)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 24,210

Getafe 2 (Casquero 54, Soldado 70)
Almeria 2 (Piatti 46, Soriano 90) Att: 11,000

Racing Santander 0
Malaga 3 (Weligton 9, Caceres 35, Ibrima 66) Att: 13,296

Sevilla 1 (Luis Fabiano 35)
Osasuna 0 Att: 35,000

Valladolid 1 (Diego Costa 23)
Zaragoza 1 (Suazo 39) Att: 15,700

Monday, February 15
Tenerife 1 (Nino 14)
Mallorca 0 Att: 17,966

Saturday, February 20
Barcelona 4 (Iniesta 7, Henry 29, Marquez 34, Thiago 84)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 75,000

Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Guardado pen 3, Riki 7)
Xerez 1 (Bermejo 38) Att: 12,000

Mallorca 1 (Mario Suarez 5)
Sevilla 3 (Jesus Navas 23, Dragutinovic 57, Perotti 62) Att: 11,100

Sunday, February 21
Almeria 1 (Piatti 87)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 11,000

Athletic Bilbao 4 (Llorente pen 18, Toquero 23, Iraola 54, Gabilondo 63)
Tenerife 1 (Alfaro 59) Att: 36,000

Malaga 2 (Fernando 13, Obinna 75)
Espanyol 1 (Victor Ruiz 45) Att: 23,000

Osasuna 1 (Camunas 86)
Valladolid 1 (Medunjanin 80) Att: 15,950

Real Madrid 6 (Cristiano Ronaldo 18, Kaka pen 20, 79, Higuain 54, 71, Xabi Alonso pen 87)
Villarreal 2 (Senna 31, Nilmar 66) Att: 57,000

Zaragoza 1 (Arizmendi 90+2)
Sporting Gijon 3 (Bilic 38, Luis Moran 63, Barral 90+3) Att: 28,000

Monday, February 22
Valencia 2 (Villa 38, 52)
Getafe 1 (Manu 76) Att: 40,000

Saturday, February 27
Barcelona 2 (Pedro 68, Messi 83)
Malaga 1 (Valdo 80) Att: 64,837

Getafe 0
Zaragoza 2 (Suazo 3, 19) Att: 12,000

Tenerife 1 (Ayoze 46)
Real Madrid 5 (Higuain 29, 41, Kaka 48, Cristiano Ronaldo pen 79, Raul 90) Att: 22,123

Sunday, February 28
Atletico Madrid 4 (Forlan pen 29, 85, Aguero 77, Jurado 90)
Valencia 1 (Silva 26) Att: 52,000

Racing Santander 0
Almeria 2 (Soriano 29, Crusat 67) Att: 15,486

Sevilla 0
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 35,000

Sporting Gijon 3 (De las Cuevas 17, Barral 70, Diego Castro pen 80)
Osasuna 2 (Nekounam pen 38, Vadocz 49) Att: 22,000

Valladolid 1 (Bueno 49)
Mallorca 2 (Ruben 69, Julio Alvarez 83) Att: 16,500

Villarreal 1 (Llorente 35)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 17,000

Xerez 1 (Bermejo 76)
Espanyol 1 (Osvaldo 18) Att: 13,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	24	19	4	1	59	14	61
Real Madrid	24	19	2	3	64	18	59
Valencia	24	13	7	4	42	26	46
Sevilla	24	13	4	7	36	25	43
Mallorca	24	12	4	8	36	26	40
Dep Coruna	24	11	5	8	26	26	38
Ath Bilbao	24	11	4	9	32	30	37
Villarreal	24	9	5	10	36	37	32
Getafe	24	10	2	12	31	32	32
Sporting Gijon	24	8	7	9	28	29	31
At Madrid	24	8	6	10	37	37	30
Osasuna	24	8	6	10	24	28	30
Almeria	24	7	8	9	27	33	29
Malaga	24	6	9	9	29	29	27
Espanyol	24	7	6	11	18	32	27
R Santander	24	6	7	11	24	37	25
Zaragoza	24	6	6	12	29	47	24
Valladolid	24	3	11	10	27	42	20
Tenerife	24	5	5	14	20	49	20
Xerez	24	2	6	16	14	44	12

LEADING GOALSCORERS
17 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
17 David Villa (Valencia)
16 Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid)
13 Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)

SPANISH CUP – semi-finals

1st legs - February 3/4; 2nd legs - February 10/11
Atletico Madrid v Racing Santander 4-0, 2-3 (agg 6-3)
Sevilla v Getafe 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)
Final - May 26

SWITZERLAND

Feb 6: St Gallen 1 Sion 0; Zurich 0 Xamax 0.
Feb 7: Basle 4 Young Boys 0; Lucerne 4 Grasshopper 2; Aarau 6 Bellinzona 3.
Feb 13: Young Boys 2 Lucerne 1.
Feb 14: Xamax 1 Basle 3; Sion 1 Zurich 1.
Feb 20: Basle 2 Aarau 1.
Feb 21: Lucerne 2 Bellinzona 1; Sion 1 Xamax 1; St Gallen 1 Young Boys 2.
Feb 27: Young Boys 2 Zurich 1.
Feb 28: Aarau 1 Lucerne 2; Bellinzona 0 Basle 2; Xamax 0 St Gallen 3.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Young Boys	22	16	2	4	49	27	50
Basle	22	14	4	4	52	28	46
Lucerne	22	11	5	6	42	32	38
St Gallen	21	8	5	8	31	28	29
Xamax	22	7	7	8	36	32	28
Sion	21	7	7	7	31	34	28
Grasshopper	19	6	2	9	33	28	26
Zurich	21	6	7	8	33	32	25
Bellinzona	21	4	3	14	29	61	15
Aarau	21	2	4	15	19	52	10

TURKEY

Feb 6: Besiktas 4 Genclerbirligi 1.
Feb 6: Eskisehirspor 2 Istanbul BB 1; Kayserispor 0 Galatasaray 0; Ankaraspor 0 Gaziantepspor 3 (awarded).
Feb 7: Kasimpasa 2 Antalyaspor 2; Ankaragucu 0 Bursaspor 0; Sivasspor 2 Denizlispor 0; Trabzonspor 3 Mersin Idmanyurdu 0; Fenerbahce 1 Diyarbakirspor 1.
Feb 13: Diyarbakirspor 1 Sivasspor 1; Gaziantepspor 2 Besiktas 0.
Feb 14: Antalyaspor 1 Eskisehirspor 2; Istanbul BB 1 Ankaragucu 1; Genclerbirligi 0 Kasimpasa 2; Denizlispor 1 Kayserispor 0; Galatasaray 3 Ankaraspor 0 (awarded); Mersin Idmanyurdu 2 Fenerbahce 2.
Feb 15: Bursaspor 1 Trabzonspor 1.
Feb 20: Sivasspor 1 Mersin Idmanyurdu 0; Eskisehirspor 0 Genclerbirligi 0; Trabzonspor 0 Istanbul BB 0.
Feb 21: Ankaragucu 2 Antalyaspor 2; Kasimpasa 3 Gaziantepspor 0; Diyarbakirspor 0 Denizlispor 2; Besiktas 1 Galatasaray 1; Ankaraspor 0 Kayserispor 3 (awarded).
Feb 22: Fenerbahce 2 Bursaspor 3.
Feb 26: Antalyaspor 1 Trabzonspor 1.
Feb 27: Bursaspor 3 Sivasspor 0; Kayserispor 1 Besiktas 2; Denizlispor 3 Ankaraspor 0 (awarded).
Feb 28: Mersin Idmanyurdu 2 Diyarbakirspor 1; Genclerbirligi 0 Ankaragucu 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Eskisehirspor 1; Istanbul BB 2 Fenerbahce 1; Galatasaray 4 Kasimpasa 1.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray	23	15	5	3	47	24	50
Bursaspor	22	14	4	4	44	21	46
Fenerbahce	23	14	3	6	45	27	45
Kayserispor	23	12	6	5	34	17	42
Besiktas	22	12	6	4	28	15	42
Trabzonspor	23	11	6	6	40	25	39
Eskisehirspor	23	8	9	5	28	22	36
Istanbul BB	22	9	7	6	29	31	34
Genclerbirligi	23	8	7	8	28	25	31
Gaziantepspor	23	8	7	8	28	26	31
Antalyaspor	23	8	6	9	33	29	30
Kasimpasa	22	7	6	9	36	35	27
Ankaragucu	23	5	10	8	26	28	25
Sivasspor	23	7	3	13	27	41	24
Mersin Idm	23	5	8	10	20	27	23
Diyarbakirspor	23	4	9	10	31	33	21
Denizlispor	23	4	4	15	19	35	16
Ankaraspor*	23	8	6	23	0	69	0

**Ankaraspor expelled from league for having "anti-competitive" links with Ankaragucu; all fixtures awarded as 3-0 wins to their opponents*

UKRAINE

Feb 27: Zakarpattya 0 Metalurh Donetsk 1; Dynamo 1 Kryvbas 0; Karpaty 2 Metalist 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 2 Illichivets 0.
Feb 28: Chornomorets 2 Tavriya 0; Obolon 0 Arsenal 0; Shakhtar 1 Vorskla 0; Dnipro 2 Zorya 2.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	17	14	3	0	39	9	45
Shakhtar	16	13	4	1	41	14	43
Metalist	17	11	2	4	22	11	35
Metalurh D	17	9	3	5	26	17	30
Dnipro	17	8	5	4	27	16	29
Karpaty	17	7	6	4	27	22	27
Tavriya	17	7	5	5	20	24	26
Obolon	17	7	1	9	19	28	22
Arsenal	17	5	6	6	22	22	21
Vorskla	17	4	7	6	17	16	19
Metalurh Z	16	5	4	9	20	29	19
Illichivets	17	5	3	9	18	28	18
Zorya	17	4	4	9	14	28	16
Chornomorets	17	4	3	10	11	23	15
Zakarpattya	17	3	1	13	11	29	10
Kryvbas	17	2	1	14	15	33	7

Surprise...Alianza (in white)

in the holders' second game, away to Alianza Lima, when Jose Sosa opened the scoring after only eight seconds – the fastest goal in the history of the Libertadores. However, the Peruvians hit back with goals from Wilmer Aguirre (three) and Jose Fernandez to win 4-1.

Meanwhile, Racing Club's Claudio Vivas became the first coaching casualty of the clausura campaign when he was sacked after three consecutive defeats, culminating in a 1-0 defeat at Gimnasia La Plata.

His successor, Miguel Angel Russo, got off to a winning start with a 1-0 victory at home to San Lorenzo.

BRAZIL

Back to winning ways

Robinho got the winner on his return to Santos as they beat Sao Paulo 2-1 in the state championship. On loan from Manchester City, the 26-year-old scored with a cheeky backheel five minutes from time after coming off the bench on the hour mark.

Botafogo beat Vasco da Gama 2-0 to win the first stage of Rio de Janeiro's state championship. Joel Santana's side will now meet the winners of the second stage of the competition in the state Final.

Making his mark...Robinho

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Preliminary round

1st legs - January 26-28, 2nd legs - February 2-10

Atletico Junior (Col) v Racing (Uru)
2-2, 0-2 (agg 2-4)
Colon (Arg) v Universidad Catolica (Chi)
3-2, 2-3 (agg 5-5; Univ Catolica 5-3 on pens)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) v Libertad (Par)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Juan Aurich (Per) v Estudiantes Tecos (Mex)
2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1)
Newell's Old Boys (Arg) v Emelec (Ecu)
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Real Potosi (Bol) v Cruzeiro (Bra)
1-1, 0-7 (agg 1-8)

Winners qualified for group stage

Group stage

Group 1

Feb 11
Cerro Porteno (Par) 1 (Ramirez 56)
Independiente Medellin (Col) 1 (Pavoni 17)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Laverni (Arg)

Feb 24
Corinthians (Bra) 2 (Elias 10, 70)
Racing (Uru) 1 (Cauterucciio 1)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 40,260. **Ref:** Orozco (Bol)
Sent off: Flores (Racing) 56min

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Cerro Porteno	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Ind Medellin	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Racing	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

Group 2

Feb 9
Nacional (Par) 0
Once Caldas (Col) 2 (Castrillon 23, Santoya 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Beligoy (Arg)

Feb 10
Sao Paulo (Bra) 2 (Washington 13, 76)
Monterrey (Mex) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 73,501. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)

Feb 24
Monterrey 2 (Santana 60, Martinez 68)
Nacional 1 (Miranda pen 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 36,485. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)

Feb 25
Once Caldas 2 (Uribe 49, Moreno 71)
Sao Paulo 1 (Rogerio Ceni 32)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 43,530. **Ref:** Pezo (Chi)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 2	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Sao Paulo	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Monterrey	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Nacional	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

Group 3

Feb 10
Bolivar (Bol) 1 (Ferreira pen 89)
Alianza Lima (Per) 3 (Fernandez 73, 74, Montano 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Haro (Ecu)

Feb 11
Estudiantes (Arg) 5 (Boselli pen 6, 59, 72, Re 43, Gonzalez 89)
Juan Aurich (Per) 1 (Tejada 34)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)
Sent off: Guizasola (Juan Aurich) 44min

Feb 18
Alianza Lima 4 (Aguirre 17, 33, 74, Fernandez 83)
Estudiantes 1 (Sosa 1)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Escalante (Ven)

Feb 24
Juan Aurich 2 (Cicliano 10, Tejada 36)
Bolivar 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,064. **Ref:** Polic (Chi)
Sent off: Ascoy (Juan Aurich) 38min

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 3	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Lima	2	2	0	0	7	2	6
Estudiantes	2	1	0	1	6	5	3
Juan Aurich	2	1	0	1	3	5	3
Bolivar	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

Group 4

Feb 9
Lanus (Arg) 0
Libertad (Par) 2 (Rodolfo Gamarra 67, Velazquez 73)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 46,419. **Ref:** Seneme (Bra)

Feb 11
Blooming (Bol) 1 (Gomez 88)
Universitario (Per) 2 (Orejuela 52, Espinoza 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Quintana (Par)

Feb 16
Libertad 4 (Caceres 45, Rodolfo Gamarra 66, 90+1, Ayala 90)
Blooming 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Sent off: Brandao 49min, Imperiale 52min (both Blooming)

Feb 17
Universitario 2 (Alva 18, Labarthe 88)
Lanus 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Soto (Ven)

Feb 25
Blooming 1 (Vieira 9)
Lanus 4 (Blanco 24, Salcedo 30, Lagos 60, 75)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Roman Evaristo (Bra)

Feb 25
Universitario 0
Libertad 0
Ref: Ponce (Chi)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 4	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
Universitario	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Lanus	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Blooming	3	0	0	3	2	10	0

Group 5

Feb 9
Cerro (Uru) 2 (Diadomo 19, Mora 62)
Deportivo Quito (Ecu) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Osorio (Chi)

Feb 23
Internacional (Bra) 2 (Nei 52, Alessandro 86)
Emelec (Ecu) 1 (Quiroz 47)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Abal (Arg)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 5	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Internacional	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Emelec	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Dep Quito	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group 6

Feb 10
Banfield (Arg) 2 (Rodriguez 55, Battion 79)
Morelia (Mex) 1 (Rey 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 34,901. **Ref:** Arias (Par)
Sent off: Alarete (Morelia) 53min

Feb 11
Nacional (Uru) 3 (Regueiro 46, 65, A Morales pen 85)
Deportivo Cuenca (Ecu) 2 (Granda 25, Escalada 67)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Osses (Chi)

Feb 17
Deportivo Cuenca 1 (Mendez pen 86)
Banfield 4 (Ervill 35, Fernandez 38, 60, Rodriguez 71)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Sent off: Bustamente (Banfield) 84min

Feb 23
Morelia 0
Nacional 0
Ref: Penuela (Col)
Sent off: Sabah (Morelia) 84min

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Banfield	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Nacional	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Morelia	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Dep Cuenca	2	0	0	2	3	7	0

Group 7

Feb 10
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 2 (Silva 5, Martinez 77)
Cruzeiro (Bra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
Sent off: Gilberto 2min, Gil 37min (both Cruzeiro)

Feb 16
Colo Colo (Chi) 1 (Paredes 58)
Deportivo Italia (Ven) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 47,017. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

Feb 23
Deportivo Italia 0
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Lopez 53)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Haro (Ecu)

Feb 24
Cruzeiro 4 (Thiago Ribeiro 7, Kleber pen 59, pen 70, Pedro Ken 88)
Colo Colo 1 (Paredes 36)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Sent off: Olate 57min, Carecedo 67min (both Colo Colo)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 7	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Velez	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Cruzeiro	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Colo Colo	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Dep Italia	2	0	0	2	0	2	0

Group 8

Feb 18
Universidad de Chile (Chi) 1 (Olivera pen 2)
Caracas (Ven) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Buckley (Per)

Feb 24
Flamengo (Bra) 2 (Leo Moura 10, Adriano 57)
Universidad Catolica (Chi) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Sent off: Willians (Flamengo) 2min, Mirosevic (Universidad) 41min

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 8	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flamengo	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Univ Chile	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Caracas	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Univ Catolica	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group winners and the six runners-up with the best record qualify for 1st knockout round, to which Guadalajara (Mex) and San Luis (Mex) received byes

ARGENTINA

CLAUSURA

Tuesday, February 2
Arsenal 0
Velez Sarsfield 3 (Lopez 51, 90, Morales 61)

Colon 2 (Fuertes 38, Lucero 49)
Racing Club 1 (Falcon 13)

Rosario Central 0
Tigre 1 (Luna 59)

Wednesday, February 3
Boca Juniors 3 (Medel 13, Palermo 47, Erbes 56)
Lanus 1 (Castillejos 42)

Gimnasia La Plata 3 (Straccuarsi 45, 81, Cuevas 90)
Estudiantes 1 (Veron 89)

Huracan 2 (Goltz pen 28, Balvorin 84)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Nunez 70)

Thursday, February 4
Chacarita Juniors 2 (Grabinski 76, Parra 87)
River Plate 3 (Ferrari 21, 28, Beu 81)

Independiente 3 (Silvera 22, 56, 58)
Atletico Tucuman 1 (Escobar 28)

San Lorenzo 0
Godoy Cruz 1 (Carranza 38)

Saturday, February 6
Lanus 3 (Aguirre 10, Salcedo 12, Diaz 81)
Argentinos Juniors 6 (Erramuspe og 24, Pavlovich 44, 56, Sosa 63, Ortigoza pen 69, Hernandez 79)

Newell's Old Boys 4 (Insaurralde 2, Achucarro 16, Formica 18, Bernardi 90)
Boca Juniors 2 (Palermo pen 35, Viatri 87)

Start...Toronto's Jeff Cunningham

CANADA

Championship kicks off

Toronto begin their defence of the Canadian Championship at home to Montreal Impact on April 28.

The three-team, six-game tournament will finish on June 2 with Toronto at home to Vancouver Whitecaps.

The winner qualifies for the preliminary round of the CONCACAF Champions League, set to begin the final week of July.

MEXICO

Toluca extend run

Indios Juarez's 3-0 defeat at Toluca means that they have now gone 25 league games without a win, a run spanning the Apertura 2009 and this year's Clausura.

The result also meant that Toluca are now undefeated in a club-record 25 home matches.

Also breaking records in Mexico were Guadalajara, who made it eight successive wins at the start of the season when they won 2-0 at home against San Luis.

New club best...Toluca (in red)

CONGO DR

Super Cup victors

African Champions League holders TP Mazembe added the African Super Cup to their

Tigre 2 (Ayala 18, pen 64)
Colon 2 (Rios 4, Pellerino 49)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Ormeno 69 7, Tobio 25)
Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Perez 40)

Sunday, February 7
Chacarita Juniors 2 (Lopez 50, Parra 55)
Banfield 1 (Garcia 10)

Estudiantes 2 (Boselli 2, Veron 44)
San Lorenzo 0

Racing Club 2 (Cahais 9, Hauche 61)
Arsenal 4 (Jara 25, Galvan 73, Obolo 85, 89)

River Plate 0
Rosario Central 0

Monday, February 8
Atletico Tucuman 0
Huracan 0

Godoy Cruz 0
Independiente 0

Friday, February 12
Arsenal 0
Tigre 2 (Ayala 10, Luna pen 58)

Rosario Central 1 (Zelaya 45)
Chacarita Juniors 1 (Lopez 85)

Saturday, February 13
Banfield 2 (Battion 59, Rodriguez 90)
Lanus 0

Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Perez 31)
Racing Club 0

Huracan 0
Godoy Cruz 0

Sunday, February 14
Boca Juniors 0
Atletico Tucuman 0

Colon 1 (Fuertes pen 44)
River Plate 0

Independiente 3 (Silvera 43, Gandin 57, Piatti 79)
Estudiantes 2 (Nunez 58, Morales Neumann 72)

San Lorenzo 0
Velez Sarsfield 0

Friday, February 19
Chacarita Juniors 1 (Parra 61)
Colon 2 (Rivarola 15, Mielo 90)

Velez Sarsfield 3 (Martinez 45, Moralez pen 64, Silva 89)
Independiente 0

Saturday, February 20
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Achucarro 54)
Lanus 1 (Salcedo 83)

Racing Club 1 (Hauche 83)
San Lorenzo 0

Tigre 1 (Fontanelle 20)
Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Stracqualursi 13)

Sunday, February 21
Atletico Tucuman 1 (Barria 3)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Paez pg 29)

Banfield 0
Rosario Central 0

Godoy Cruz 1 (Higuain 24)
Boca Juniors 1 (Palermo 70)

River Plate 1 (Gallardo 51)
Arsenal 1 (Sena 40)

Monday, February 22
Estudiantes 2 (Boselli 30, Veron 62)
Huracan 0

Wednesday, February 24
Banfield 3 (Fernandez 16, Quintero 29, Ramirez 51)
Argentinos Juniors 0

Friday, February 26
Arsenal 0
Chacarita Juniors 3 (Morales 31, 50, Parra 83)

Boca Juniors 1 (Palermo pen 25)
Estudiantes 1 (Gonzalez 90)

Saturday, February 27
Colon 1 (Rivarola 37)
Rosario Central 1 (Figueroa 88)

Huracan 3 (Balvorin pen 49, Toranzo pen 78, Laurito 80)
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Zarate 42, Silva 88)

Independiente 1 (Gandin pen 41)
Racing Club 0

Sunday, February 28
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Gentiletti 32)
Godoy Cruz 2 (Higuain 6, Sanchez 20)

Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Perez 8)
River Plate 1 (Canales 90)

Lanus 3 (Blanco 40, Lagos 52, Salcedo 67)
Atletico Tucuman 0

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Nunez 65, Boghassian 75)
Banfield 1 (Ramirez 77)

San Lorenzo 1 (Alfaro 82)
Tigre 0

ARGENTINA – CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colon	6	3	3	0	9	6	12
Godoy Cruz	6	3	3	0	5	2	12
Velez	6	3	2	1	11	5	11
Independiente	6	3	2	1	7	6	11
Chacarita Jrs	6	3	1	2	11	7	10
Estudiantes	6	3	1	2	11	7	10
Banfield	6	3	1	2	8	4	10
Newell's	6	2	2	1	8	6	8
Gimnasia LP	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Tigre	6	2	2	2	6	8	8
Huracan	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Boca Juniors	6	1	4	1	9	9	7
San Lorenzo	6	2	1	3	2	4	7
Lanus	6	2	1	3	11	14	7
Racing Club	6	2	0	4	7	8	6
River Plate	6	1	3	2	5	6	6
Argentinos Jrs	5	1	2	2	10	11	5
Rosario	6	0	4	2	2	6	4
Arsenal	6	1	1	4	5	14	4
At Tucuman	6	0	3	3	2	8	3

LEADING GOALSCORERS
5 Martin Palermo (Boca Juniors)
4 Mauro Boselli (Estudiantes)
4 Facundo Parra (Chacarita Juniors)
4 Andres Silvera (Independiente)

CHILE

APERTURA

Feb 2: Univ Catolica 4 Morning 0; O'Higgins 1 Univ Concepcion 2; La Serena 1 San Luis 3.
Feb 3: Cobreloa 2 Cobresal 1; Palestino 0 Espanola 0; Huachipato 1 Nublense 1; Everton 2 Univ Chile 1; San Felipe 1 Audax Italiano 2.
Feb 4: Colo Colo 3 Wanderers 0.
Feb 5: San Luis 1 Univ Catolica 1.
Feb 6: Univ Chile 3 Huachipato 0; Univ Concepcion 2 Everton 1.
Feb 7: Cobresal 1 O'Higgins 2; Morning 1 San Felipe 0; Espanola 1 Colo Colo 0; Wanderers 5 La Serena 0; Audax Italiano 3 Cobreloa 1; Nublense 1 Palestino 0.
Feb 12: Colo Colo 2 Nublense 2.
Feb 13: Wanderers 3 Univ Chile 3; La Serena 3 San Felipe 1; Morning 2 Palestino 1.
Feb 14: Cobreloa 1 Univ Concepcion 1; O'Higgins 5 Audax Italiano 1; San Luis 0 Everton 2; Huachipato 1 Espanola 2; Univ Catolica 0 Cobresal 2.
Feb 17: O'Higgins 1 Univ Catolica 0.
Feb 18: Everton 0 Huachipato 1.
Feb 20: Espanola 2 Univ Catolica 1; Univ Concepcion 1 San Luis 1; Audax Italiano 2 Colo Colo 3.
Feb 21: Cobresal 1 Wanderers 0; Palestino 1 Cobreloa 0; San Felipe 2 O'Higgins 0; Nublense 3 La Serena 1; Univ Chile 2 Morning 1.

CHILE – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Espanola	6	4	2	0	8	4	14
Univ Chile	6	4	1	1	18	9	13
O'Higgins	6	4	0	2	11	7	12
Nublense	6	3	2	1	13	11	11
Colo Colo	6	3	1	2	13	9	10
Everton	6	3	0	3	7	5	9
U Concepcion	6	2	3	1	7	6	9
Cobresal	6	3	0	3	8	9	9
San Felipe	6	3	0	3	8	8	9
Huachipato	6	2	2	2	5	7	8
Univ Catolica	6	2	1	3	8	7	7
Audax Italiano	6	2	1	3	15	18	7
Cobreloa	6	2	1	3	7	10	7
Morning	6	2	0	4	6	13	6
La Serena	6	2	0	4	10	18	6
Wanderers	6	1	2	3	9	9	5
San Luis	6	1	2	3	7	9	5
Palestino	6	1	2	3	4	6	5

COLOMBIA

APERTURA

Feb 5: Once Caldas 3 Envigado 1.
Feb 6: Cucuta 0 Pereira 2; Dep Cali 4 Millonarios 1.
Feb 7: Huila 1 Cortulua 1; Chico 0 Cartagena 2; Junior 2 La Equidad 0; Quindio 0 Tolima 3; Nacional 1 Ind Medellin 2; Ind Santa Fe 2 America 0.
Feb 12: Millonarios 0 Quindio 0.
Feb 13: Envigado 1 Chico 0; Tolima 2 Junior 2; Nacional 2 Dep Cali 0.
Feb 14: Cortulua 2 Ind Santa Fe 0; Cartagena 2 Huila 1; Pereira 1 Once Caldas 1; La Equidad 0 Cucuta 0; America 1 Ind Medellin 0.
Feb 17: Chico 1 Pereira 1; Quindio 0 Nacional 2; Junior 2 Millonarios 0; Cucuta 1 Tolima 0; Once Caldas 2 La Equidad 3; Huila 2 Envigado 2; Ind Santa Fe 2 Cartagena 2; America 0 Cortulua 1.
Feb 18: Ind Medellin 2 Dep Cali 1.
Feb 20: Pereira 1 Huila 3; Nacional 1 Junior 0; Millonarios 2 Cucuta 0.
Feb 21: Cortulua 1 Ind Medellin 2; Cartagena 1 America 0; La Equidad 2 Chico 1; Dep Cali 2 Quindio 0; Envigado 1 Ind Santa Fe 1.
Feb 27: Ind Medellin 1 Quindio 0; Cucuta 1 Nacional 1; Cortulua 1 Cartagena 2.
Feb 28: Junior 3 Dep Cali 0; Once Caldas 3 Millonarios 1; Chico 1 Tolima 1; Huila 4 La Equidad 1; Ind Santa Fe 0 Pereira 2; America 2 Envigado 2.

COLOMBIA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cartagena	6	5	1	0	13	7	16
Ind Medellin	6	4	1	1	7	4	13
Junior	6	3	2	1	11	5	11
Nacional	6	3	1	2	6	5	10
La Equidad	6	3	1	2	7	9	10
Huila	6	2	3	1	13	9	9
Pereira	6	2	3	1	9	7	9
Envigado	6	2	3	1	8	8	9
Tolima	5	2	2	1	9	5	8
Once Caldas	5	2	1	2	12	10	7
Cortulua	6	2	1	3	7	7	7
Millonarios	6	2	1	3	6	10	7
Ind Santa Fe	6	1	3	2	5	7	6
Dep Cali	6	2	0	4	8	11	6
America	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
Chico	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
Cucuta	6	1	2	3	2	6	5
Quindio	6	0	1	5	0	9	1

ECUADOR

1st stage

Feb 5: Emelec 1 Dep Quito 1.
Feb 6: El Nacional 0 Cuenca 0; Independiente 1 Manta 0; Olmedo 1 Espoli 1.
Feb 7: Univ Catolica 0 Barcelona 3; Macara 2 LDU 2.
Feb 12: LDU 3 Independiente 0; Manta 1 Olmedo 0.
Feb 13: Barcelona 2 Macara 0; Dep Quito 1 El Nacional 3.
Feb 14: Espoli 0 Emelec 3.
Feb 18: Emelec 3 Manta 3.
Feb 20: Dep Quito 2 Espoli 0.
Feb 21: El Nacional 1 Univ Catolica 2; Olmedo 0 LDU 1; Macara 1 Cuenca 2; Independiente 1 Barcelona 1.
Feb 24: Cuenca 1 Univ Catolica 0.
Feb 26: Manta 3 Dep Quito 0.
Feb 27: Espoli 5 El Nacional 3.
Feb 28: Cuenca 3 Independiente 0; Barcelona 1 Olmedo 0; LDU 5 Emelec 0; Univ Catolica 2 Macara 3.

ECUADOR – 1ST STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU	4	3	1	0	11	2	10
Barcelona	4	3	1	0	7	1	10
Cuenca	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Manta	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Emelec	4	1	2	1	7	9	5
El Nacional	4	1	1	2	7	8	4
Macara	4	1	1	2	6	8	4
Espoli	4	1	1	2	6	9	4
Dep Quito	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Independiente	4	1	1	2	2	7	4
Univ Catolica	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
Olmedo	4	0	1	3	1	4	1

Super Cup star...Singuluma

trophy cabinet, beating Stade Malien of Mali 2-0 with goals from Zambian duo Sunzu Stopila and Given Singuluma.

Mazembe become the first Congolese club to lift the Super Cup trophy since its inception in 1993.

KENYA

Successful start

League champions Sofapaka began the new season in style with a 1-0 victory over President's Cup winners AFC Leopards in the season-opening champions cup. Humphrey Mieno scored the only goal of the game.

MALAWI

Strikers defend their championship

Silver Strikers retained their league title with a 2-2 draw in the final game of the season against MTL Wanderers.

The point was enough to keep champions Strikers clear of runners-up Escom United, who won 1-0 away to Moyale Barracks.

SENEGAL

Ghanaians shocked

Champions League debutantes ASC Linguere caused a surprise when they knocked out former champions Asante Kotoko of Ghana 4-2 on penalties after their preliminary-round tie finished 2-2 on aggregate.

TUNISIA

Long wait finally over

CS Sfaxien ended a winless streak that dated back to November with a 2-1 win at home to Olympique Beja. They are currently 10 points behind the leaders Esperance.

PARAGUAY

APERTURA

Feb 5: 3 de Febrero 0 Nacional 3.
Feb 6: Libertad 2 Rubio Nu 1; Guarani 3 Sol de America 1; Cerro Porteno 1 Luqueno 0.
Feb 7: Colombia 0 Trinidense 0; Olimpia 3 Tacuary 2.
Feb 12: Rubio Nu 1 Guarani 1; Tacuary 0 Libertad 4.
Feb 13: Sol de America 3 3 de Febrero 1; Luqueno 1 Olimpia 1; Nacional 1 Colombia 2.
Feb 14: Trinidense 1 Cerro Porteno 2.
Feb 17: Rubio Nu 3 Sol de America 0; Olimpia 3 Trinidense 1; Colombia 2 3 de Febrero 3; Guarani 5 Tacuary 2; Cerro Porteno 3 Nacional 0.
Feb 26: Nacional 0 Olimpia 0.
Feb 27: Sol de America 1 Colombia 2; Luqueno 1 Guarani 2; Tacuary 0 Rubio Nu 1; 3 de Febrero 0 Cerro Porteno 1; Trinidense 1 Libertad 1.
Feb 28: Luqueno 1 Sol de America 0.
Feb 27: Guarani 1 3 de Febrero 1.
Feb 28: Tacuary 2 Trinidense 0; Olimpia 3 Cerro Porteno 2.
Mar 1: Rubio Nu 4 Nacional 1; Libertad 3 Colombia 0.

PARAGUAY – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	6	5	0	1	11	5	15
Guarani	6	4	2	0	13	6	14
Rubio Nu	6	4	1	1	13	4	13
Olimpia	6	3	2	1	10	7	11
Libertad	5	3	1	1	10	3	10
Colombia	6	3	1	2	9	10	10
Nacional	6	2	1	3	10	11	7
3 de Febrero	6	2	1	3	8	10	7
Luqueno	5	1	1	3	5	7	4
Tacuary	6	1	0	5	7	15	3
Sol America	6	1	0	5	7	17	3
Trinidense	6	0	2	4	3	9	2

PERU

Regular season

Feb 13: Sport Boys 2 Jose Galvez 1; Cesar Vallejo 2 Sporting Cristal 3.
Feb 14: Al Atletico 2 Cienciano 1; Huancayo 2 Total Chalaco 2; Leon 1 Alianza Lima 0; San Martin 3 CNI 1; Universitario 1 Inti Gas 2; Melgar 1 Aurich 1.
Feb 20: Inti Gas 1 Leon 2; Sporting Cristal 3 Melgar 1; CNI 3 Sport Boys 1.
Feb 21: Cienciano 1 San Martin 3; Total Chalaco 0 Cesar Vallejo 1; Juan Aurich 2 Universitario 1; Jose Galvez 1 Huancayo 0; Alianza Lima 3 Alianza Atletico 0.
Feb 27: Sport Boys 2 Cienciano 1; Cesar Vallejo 3 Jose Galvez 0; Huancayo 4 CNI 0.
Feb 28: Melgar 1 Total Chalaco 1; San Martin 0 Alianza Lima 1; Alianza Atletico 1 Inti Gas 1; Leon 1 Juan Aurich 0.

PERU – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leon	3	3	0	0	4	1	9
Cesar Vallejo	3	2	0	1	8	3	6
San Martin	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
S Cristal	2	2	0	0	6	3	6
Alianza Lima	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Sport Boys	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Huancayo	3	1	1	1	6	3	4
Inti Gas	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Juan Aurich	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Al Atletico	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Jose Galvez	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
CNI	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
Total Chalaco	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Melgar	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
Universitario	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Cienciano	3	0	0	3	3	7	0

URUGUAY

CLAUSURA

Feb 6: Cerrito 1 Cerro 4; Rampla 2 River Plate 1; Central Espanol 1 Cerro Largo 2; Fenix 2 Wanderers 1; Nacional 0 Defensor 1.
Feb 7: Danubio 2 Liverpool 2; Atenas 2 Tacuarembo 0; Penarol 3 Racing 0.
Feb 10: Racing 1 Central Espanol 0.
Feb 13: Cerro Largo 1 Fenix 0; Wanderers 1 Cerrito 2; Tacuarembo 1 Penarol 3; Defensor 3 Central Espanol 4.
Feb 14: Racing 2 Rampla 1; Cerro 3 Atenas 2; Liverpool 0 Nacional 2.
Feb 17: Racing 0 Fenix 2.
Feb 18: Nacional 1 River Plate 4.
Feb 20: Cerrito 3 Racing 0; Danubio 2 Cerro Largo 0; Rampla 1 Tacuarembo 0; Central Espanol 1 Cerro 2.
Feb 21: Fenix 3 Defensor 0; Atenas 0 Wanderers 2; Penarol 3 Liverpool 1.
Feb 24: River Plate 3 Danubio 0.
Feb 27: River Plate 2 Penarol 3; Wanderers 1 Central Espanol 1; Cerro Largo 0 Atenas 2; Defensor 2 Rampla 1.
Feb 28: Cerro 1 Danubio 0; Tacuarembo 1 Cerrito 0; Liverpool 0 Fenix 0; Racing 0 Nacional 3.

URUGUAY – CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Penarol	6	5	0	0	18	7	18
Fenix	6	4	1	1	8	2	13
Cerro	6	4	1	1	13	8	13
Nacional	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
Rampla	6	3	1	2	9	8	10
Atenas	6	3	0	3	10	6	9
Liverpool	6	2	2	2	9	9	8
River Plate	6	2	1	3	13	10	7
Danubio	6	2	1	3	9	11	7
Cerrito	6	2	1	3	8	11	7
Tacuarembo	6	2	1	3	8	11	7
Cerro Largo	6	2	1	3	5	9	7
Defensor	6	2	0	4	7	12	6
Racing	6	2	0	4	3	12	6
C Espanol	6	1	2	3	10	12	5
Wanderers	6	1	1	4	8	11	4

VENEZUELA

CLAUSURA

Feb 7: Carabobo 2 Yaracuyanos 2; Monagas 1 Caracas 1; Trujillanos 0 Centro Italo 1; Estudiantes 2 Llaneros 2; Italia 2 Anzoategui 0; Mineros 1 Aragua 0; Lara 1 El Vigia 0; Zamora 2 Zulia 1.
Feb 10: Estudiantes 2 Carabobo 1.
Feb 11: Caracas 2 Mineros 1.
Feb 12: Yaracuyanos 1 Espoir 3; Aragua 2 Lara 1; Zulia 0 El Vigia 1; Llaneros 1 Trujillanos 1; Anzoategui 0 Zamora 2; Centro Italo 1 Monagas 2.
Feb 21: El Vigia 4 Aragua 2; Carabobo 1 Trujillanos 1; Espoir 2 Estudiantes 2; Monagas 3 Llaneros 0; Mineros 1 Centro Italo 1; Zamora 1 Tachira 1; Zulia 0 Anzoategui 1.
Feb 24: Lara 1 Caracas 1.
Feb 26: Centro Italo 1 Lara 3; Yaracuyanos 1 Zamora 2; Carabobo 3 Espoir 3; Caracas 6 El Vigia 0; Llaneros 3 Mineros 1; Trujillanos 3 Monagas 0; Tachira 2 Zulia 0; Estudiantes 3 Italia 2; Anzoategui 1 Aragua 1.

VENEZUELA – CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caracas	6	3	3	0	14	5	12
Tachira	5	3	2	0	7	2	11
Espoir	6	3	2	1	14	10	11
Zamora	6	3	2	1	9	6	11
Italia	5	3	1	1	11	6	10
Monagas	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Lara	6	2	3	1	8	6	9
Estudiantes	6	2	3	1	9	8	9
Llaneros	6	2	3	1	8	9	9
Trujillanos	6	2	2	2	9	7	8
Aragua	6	2	1	3	7	10	7
Anzoategui	6	2	1	3	5	8	7
El Vigia	6	2	1	3	7	12	7
Mineros	6	1	3	2	6	8	6
Centro Italo	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
Yaracuyanos	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Carabobo	6	0	3	3	7	11	3
Zulia	6	0	1	5	2	9	1

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

CLAUSURA

Feb 6: Queretaro 0 Guadalajara 2.
Feb 6: Cruz Azul 0 Santos 2; Atlante 1 Puebla 1; Tigres 2 Pumas 2; Pachuca 2 San Luis 0; Atlas 1 America 0.
Feb 7: Toluca 1 Monterrey 1; Indios 0 Morelia 1; Tecos 3 Jaguares 0.
Feb 13: Jaguares 0 Queretaro 1; Morelia 3 Atlas 0; Guadalajara 2 Atlante 0; San Luis 1 Indios 1; Santos 1 Toluca 0.
Feb 14: Pumas 1 Tecos 1; Puebla 3 Pachuca 5; America 2 Cruz Azul 0; Monterrey 2 Tigres 1.
Feb 17: Atlante 2 Jaguares 0; Tecos 3 Monterrey 4; Pachuca 0 Guadalajara 1; Cruz Azul 1 Morelia 0; Puebla 1 San Luis 0; Queretaro 3 Pumas 2; Atlas 7 Indios 1; Toluca 3 America 1.
Feb 18: Tigres 1 Santos 2.
Feb 20: Jaguares 2 Pachuca 2; Morelia 0 Toluca 0; Guadalajara 3 Puebla 2; San Luis 3 Atlas 1; Monterrey 3 Queretaro 0.
Feb 21: Pumas 1 Atlante 0; Indios 0 Cruz Azul 0; Santos 3 Tecos 3; America 2 Tigres 2.
Feb 27: Cruz Azul 3 Atlas 1; Queretaro 1 Santos 1; Guadalajara 2 San Luis 0; Tigres 0 Morelia 3; Pachuca 0 Pumas 3; Atlante 0 Monterrey 1.
Feb 28: Toluca 3 Indios 0; Tecos 1 America 2; Puebla 3 Jaguares 3.

MEXICO – CLAUSURA – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadalajara	8	8	0	0	19	6	24
Queretaro	8	4	2	2	8	9	14
Atlas	8	4	0	4	15	13	12
Toluca	8	3	4	2	9	7	10
San Luis	8	2	1	5	8	16	7
Indios	8	0	3	5	2	17	3

MEXICO – CLAUSURA – GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monterrey	8	6	1	1	17	8	19
Morelia	8	5	1	2	13	4	16
Pachuca	8	4	1	3	17	11	13
America	8	4	1	3	13	10	13
Puebla	8	2	2	4	14	17	8
Jaguares	8	0	4	4	8	15	4

MEXICO – CLAUSURA – GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	8	4	3	1	13	9	15
Pumas	8	3	4	1	11	8	13
Cruz Azul	8	3	2	3	5	7	11
Tigres	8	1	3	4	10	16	6
Tecos	8	1	2	5	15	19	5
Atlante	8	1	2	5	6	13	5

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round

1st legs - Feb 12-14; 2nd legs - Feb 26-28

Apaches Club (Com) v Ferroviario (Moz)
3-5, 1-4 (agg 4-9)
APR (Rwa) v Recreativo (Ang)
2-2, 1-0 (agg 3-2)
Armed Forces (Gam) v JS Kabylie (Alg)
1-2, 0-3 (agg 1-5)
ASC Linguere (Sen) v Asante Kotoko (Gha)
2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2; ASC Linguere 4-2 on pens)
Diables Noirs (Con) v ES Setif (Alg)
3-2, 0-2 (agg 3-4)
Djoliba (Mli) v Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby)
1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
East End Lions (SLe) v Esperance Tunis (Tun)
2-2, 2-3 (agg 4-5)
Ela Nguema (EqG) v Petro Atletico (Ang)
2-3, 1-6 (agg 3-9)
Fello Star (Gui) v Raja Casablanca (Mor)
1-3, 1-1 (agg 2-4)
Gaborone United (Bot) v Orlando Pirates (SAf)
0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2; Gaborone on away goals)
Gazelle (Chd) v Bayelsa United (Nig)
1-0, 2-2 (agg 3-2)
La Passe (Sey) v Canepipe Starlight (Mts)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Mafunzo (Zan) v Gunners (Zim)
1-2, 0-4 (agg 1-6)
Mbabane Swallows (Swz) v SuperSport Utd (SAf)
1-3, 2-2 (agg 3-5)
Ole Bolantas (GuB) v Difaa Jadidi (Mor)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Revenue Authority (Uga) v Zanaco (Zam)
1-0, 0-4 (agg 1-4)
Sahel (Ngr) v Club Africain (Tun)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Club Africain on away goals)
Saint George (Eth) v Al Merreikh (Sud)
1-1, 1-3 (agg 2-4)
Sofapaka (Ken) v Ismaili (Egy)
0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)
Stade Mandji (Gab) v ASFA Yennenga (BuF)
0-2, 1-4 (agg 1-6)
Stade Temponnaise (Reu) v Ajesaia (Mad)
2-1, 3-1 (agg 5-2)
Tempete Mocaf (CAR) v Al Ittihad (Lby)
1-2, 0-6 (agg 1-8)
Vital'o (Bdi) v Tiko United (Cam)
2-2, 2-2 (agg 4-4; Tiko 5-3 on pens)
Young Africans (Tan) v St Eloi Lupopo (DRC)
2-3, 0-1 (agg 2-4)

Walkovers:
Africa Sports (IvC) – Benin withdrew their representatives; Union Douala (Cam) – Sao Tome withdrew their representatives

Byes:
Al Ahly (Egy), Al Hilal (Sud), ASEC Abidjan (IvC), Dynamos (Zim), Heartland (Nig), TP Mazembe (DRC; holders)

AUSTRALIA

Sydney win showdown

Sydney beat Melbourne Victory 2-0 to finish top of the A-League regular standings and secure a place in the 2011 Asian Champions League. Slovak midfielder Karol Kisel and former Socceroo striker John Aloisi were the scorers in front of a season-best crowd of 25,407.

Victory then beat Sydney 2-1 in the first leg of their play-off for the right to host the Grand Final on March 20.

However, Victory defender Matthew Kemp, who made his Australia debut against Kuwait in January, ruptured his anterior cruciate ligament in an earlier A-League clash with North Queensland Fury and will be out of action for nine months, missing his side's entire Asian Champions League campaign.

Missing out...Kemp

BAHRAIN

King's Cup winners

Al Rifa won the King's Cup with a comprehensive 4-0 victory over Al Busaiteen. Ibrahi Al Abidly (own goal), Ismael Abdullatif (two) and Ali Sayyed Issa were the scorers.

BRUNEI

Unbeaten run goes on

QAF's 2-0 victory over AH United secured their third successive championship. The club from the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, stretched their unbeaten run in the league to more than two years, dating back to January 2008.

CHINA

Match-fixing bans

Chengdu Blades and Guangzhou have been relegated from the Chinese

1st round draw

Africa Sports v Al Hilal
Al Ittihad v Difaa Jadida
APR v TP Mazembe
Club Africain v JS Kabylie
Curepipe Starlight v Gaborone United
Djoliba v ASC Linguere
Esperance Tunis v ASFA Yennenga
Gazelle v Al Marrekh
Gunners v Al Ahly
Ismaili v Stade Tamponnaise
Raja Casablanca v Petro Atletico
St Eloi Lupopo v Dynamos
SuperSport United v Ferroviario
Tiko United v Heartland
Union Douala v ES Setif
Zanaco v ASEC Abidjan
1st legs - March 19-21, 2nd legs - April 2-4

CONFEDERATION CUP

Preliminary round

1st legs - Feb 12-14; 2nd legs - Feb 26-28
AFC Leopards (Ken) v Banks (Eth) 3-1, 0-3 (agg 3-4); AS Fan (Ngr) v Isola Wazi (Ivc) 2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2); ASC Diaraf (Sen) v FUS Rabat (Mor) 2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3); Atletico Olympic (Bdi) v Warri Wolves (Nig) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2); Atraco (Rwa) v El Amal (Sud) 2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2; El Amal 11-10 on pens); Benfica (Gab) v Baraka Djoma (Gui) 0-0, 2-3 (agg 2-3); Caps United (Zim) v Mbabane Highlanders (Swa) 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1; Caps 8-7 on pens); Central Parade (Sle) v CO Bamako (Mli) 0-0, 0-4 (agg 0-4); Costa do Sol (Moz) v UF Santos (Bot) 2-0, 3-1 (agg 5-1); Coton Chad (Chd) v Al Ahly Tripoli (Lby) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2); DC Motema Pembe (DRC) v Anges de Fatima (CAR) 3-0, 1-1 (agg 4-1); El Dragons (Eqg) v AC Leopards (Con) 2-3, 0-4 (agg 2-7); Lengthens (Zim) v AS Adema (Mad) 2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1); Miembeni (Zan) v Petrojet (Egy) 2-2, 0-2 (agg 2-4); Pamplemousses (Mts) v Moroka Swallows (SAf) 1-2, 0-3 (agg 1-5); Sewe Sport (IvC) v USFA (BuF) 2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1); Tersana (Lby) v CR Belouizdad (Alg) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3).

Walkovers:
Khartoum-3 (Sud) – SC Villa (Uga) withdraw; Panthere Nde (Cam) – Benin withdrew their representatives; Academica Soyo (Ang) – Sao Tome withdrew their representatives

Byes:
AS Vita Club (DRC), Cotonsport (Cam), CS Sfaxien (Tun), Enyimba (Nig), Etoile Sahel (Tun), FAR Rabat (Mor), FC105 (Gab), Haras Hedood (Egy), Primeiro Agosto (Ang), Simba (Tan), Stade Malien (Mli), Zesco United (Zam)

1st round draw

AC Leopards v Cotonsport; Academica Soyo v Enyimba; Al Ahly Tripoli v CS Sfaxien; AS Fan v Etoile Sahel; Banks v Haras Hedood; Baraka Djoma v FUS Rabat; Caps United v Moroka Swallows; CO Bamako v Primeiro Agosto; CR Belouizdad v FAR Rabat; DC Motema Pembe v FC105; El Amal v Costa do Sol; Lengthens v Simba; Panthere Nde v AS Vita Club; Petrojet v Khartoum-3; Sewe Sport v Stade Malien; Warri Wolves v Zesco United
1st legs - March 19-21; 2nd legs - April 2-4

EGYPT

Feb 7: Ittihad 1 Petrojet 0; Ismaili 2 Mansoura 1.
Feb 8: Gouna 0 Assyut 1; Shorta 2 Haras Hedood 1; Mehalla 2 Ahly 0; Masry 2 Entag Harby 1; Jaish 2 Mokawloon 1; Zamalek 2 ENPPI 0.
Feb 12: Assyut 0 Entag Harby 1; Mokawloon 4 Ittihad 1; Haras Hedood 0 Jaish 0; Mansoura 0 Gouna 2; Masry 1 Mehalla 0; Ahly 4 Shorta 2.
Feb 17: Shorta 1 Masry 1; Gouna 0 ENPPI 1; Mehalla 1 Assyut 2; Jaish 0 Ittihad 1; Zamalek 1 Mokawloon 0.
Feb 18: Entag Harby 0 Mansoura 0; Haras Hedood 1 Ahly 1; Ismaili 1 Petrojet 3.
Feb 22: Assyut 1 Shorta 2; ENPPI 1 Entag Harby 3; Petrojet 3 Gouna 1; Ittihad 1 Zamalek 2; Mokawloon 1 Ismaili 1.
Feb 23: Masry 1 Haras Hedood 1; Mansoura 1 Mehalla 0; Ahly 2 Jaish 2.

EGYPT	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ahly	19	11	7	1	29	15	40
Petrojet	18	10	5	3	30	17	35
Ismaili	18	8	8	2	22	17	32
Jaish	19	8	6	5	31	24	30
Zamalek	18	9	3	6	23	16	30
Entag Harby	19	7	8	6	27	21	27
Shorta	18	7	6	6	26	22	27
Ittihad	19	7	5	7	19	20	26
ENPPI	18	6	6	6	19	25	24
Mokawloon	19	5	8	6	23	21	23
Masry	19	4	9	6	19	24	21
Mehalla	18	5	6	8	13	21	21
Haras Hedood	19	4	8	7	19	25	20
Gouna	19	4	6	9	15	22	18
Mansoura	19	3	5	11	16	24	14
Assyut	19	2	6	11	10	27	12

SOUTH AFRICA

Feb 2: Cosmos 0 Maritzburg 0; Arrows 1 AmaZulu 2; Ajax 2 Platinum Stars 0; Swallows 0 Chiefs 0.
Feb 3: Free State Stars 3 Santos 3; Aces 1 Wits 1; Sundowns 0 Celtic 0; Pirates 0 SuperSport 0.
Feb 6: Platinum Stars 1 Santos 0; Chiefs 2 Cosmos 2; Wits 0 Pirates 0; SuperSport 2 Free State Stars 0; Maritzburg 1 Arrows 0.
Feb 7: Ajax 0 Sundowns 1; Celtic 1 Swallows 1; AmaZulu 0 Aces 0.
Feb 9: Arrows 0 Chiefs 0; Santos 1 SuperSport 2.
Feb 10: Free State Stars 1 Wits 1; Sundowns 1 P Stars 0; Cosmos 0 Celtic 1; Aces 1 Maritzburg 0; Swallows 2 Ajax 1; Pirates 2 AmaZulu 0.
Feb 13: Platinum Stars 0 Free State Stars 3.
Feb 14: Sundowns 0 Santos 0.
Feb 16: Celtic 2 Arrows 2; Ajax 1 Cosmos 0.
Feb 17: AmaZulu 1 Free State Stars 0; Maritzburg 2 Pirates 1; P Stars 0 SuperSport 1; Wits 0 Santos 3.
Feb 18: Sundowns 3 Swallows 3.
Feb 20: Pirates 0 Chiefs 0; Aces 0 Celtic 0.
Feb 24: Chiefs 2 Aces 0; Swallows 1 Platinum Stars 0; Cosmos 2 Sundowns 0; Arrows 1 Ajax 1; Free State Stars 0 Maritzburg 0; Santos 0 AmaZulu 1; SuperSport 1 Wits 2.

SOUTH AFRICA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SuperSport	29	16	9	4	51	22	57
Sundowns	29	15	8	6	40	24	53
Chiefs	29	13	9	7	37	24	48
Santos	29	11	11	7	33	20	44
Pirates	29	10	13	6	25	17	43
Celtic	29	9	14	6	37	34	41
Ajax	29	11	8	10	26	26	41
Swallows	29	10	9	10	29	36	39
AmaZulu	29	10	6	13	27	35	36
Maritzburg	29	8	13	10	28	38	35
Arrows	29	6	14	9	25	30	32
Wits	29	6	14	9	30	38	32
FS Stars	29	5	16	8	26	26	31
Platinum Stars	29	5	4	16	26	32	31
Aces	29	5	10	14	19	37	25
Cosmos	29	3	12	13	21	39	24

TUNISIA

Feb 3: Hammam-Sousse 2 Esperance Tunis 2; Monastir 1 Sfaxien 1.
Feb 6: Club Africain 1 Gafsa 0.
Feb 7: Kasserine 1 Sfaxien 0; Esperance Zarzis 1 Kairouanaise 1; Olympique 0 Esperance Tunis 1; Hammam-Sousse 0 Hammam-Lif 1; Stade Tunisien 0 Etoile Sahel 1; Monastir 1 Bizertin 2.
Feb 14: Bizertin 1 Hammam-Sousse 0; Sfaxien 2 Olympique 1; Etoile Sahel 1 Esperance Zarzis 1; Gafsa 0 Monastir 1; Hammam-Lif 2 Kasserine 0.
Feb 18: Esperance Tunis 1 Stade Tunisien 0; Kairouanaise 1 Club Africain 0.
Feb 20: Hammam-Sousse 1 Sfaxien 0.
Feb 21: Kasserine 1 Esperance Tunis 0; Stade Tunisien 0 Kairouanaise 0; Club Africain 2 Bizertin 0; Olympique 1 Etoile Sahel 1; Esperance Zarzis 1 Gafsa 0; Monastir 1 Hammam-Lif 1.
Feb 27: Etoile Sahel 3 Hammam-Sousse 2.
Feb 28: Kairouanaise 1 Kasserine 0; Bizertin 0 Stade Tunisien 1; Gafsa 4 Olympique 1; Hammam-Lif 0 Esperance Zarzis 0.

TUNISIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance T	16	11	3	2	38	12	36
Etoile Sahel	17	10	4	3	31	16	34
Club Africain	16	10	4	2	15	5	34
Stade Tunisien	17	9	4	4	17	10	31
Sfaxien	16	7	5	4	20	13	26
Bizertin	17	6	7	4	18	16	25
Kairouanaise	17	7	3	7	11	17	24
Esperance Z	17	4	7	6	11	19	19
Monastir	16	3	7	6	17	16	16
Hammam-Lif	17	4	4	9	16	21	16
Gafsa	17	4	4	9	15	24	16
Olympique	17	4	4	9	15	24	16
Kasserine	17	4	2	11	11	30	14
Ham-Sousse	17	3	4	10	15	25	13

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round

West Asia section
Final
Feb 6: Al Wahda (UAE) 5 Churchill Brothers (Ind) 2.
Al Wahda qualified for group stage (Group B); Churchill Brothers entered AFC Cup at group stage

East Asia section
Final
Feb 6: Singapore Armed Forces (Sin) 0 Muangthong United (Tha) 0 (aet; Armed Forces 4-3 on pens).
Armed Forces qualified for group stage (Group G); Muangthong entered AFC Cup at group stage

Group stage

Group A
Feb 23: Al Jazira (UAE) 1 Al Gharafa (Qat) 2; Al Ahli (Sau) 1 Esteghlal Tehran (Irn) 2.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Gharafa	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Esteghlal	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Al Ahli	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Al Jazira	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

Group B
Feb 23: Bunyodkor (Uzb) 3 Al Ittihad (Sau) 0; Zob-Ahan (Irn) 1 Al Wahda (UAE) 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bunyodkor	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Zob-Ahan	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Al Wahda	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Al Ittihad	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Group C
Feb 24: Al Ain (UAE) 0 Pakhtakor (Uzb) 1; Al Shabab (Sau) 1 Sepahan (Irn) 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pakhtakor	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Al Shabab	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Sepahan	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Al Ain	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Group D
Feb 24: Al Sadd (Qat) 0 Al Hilal (Sau) 3; Mes (Irn) 4 Al Ahli (UAE) 2.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Mes	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
Al Ahli	1	0	0	1	2	4	0
Al Sadd	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Group E
Feb 23: Songnam Ilhwa (SKo) 2 Kawasaki Frontale (Jap) 0; Beijing Guoan (Chn) 1 Melbourne Victory (Aus) 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Songnam	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Beijing	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Melbourne	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Kawasaki	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group F
Feb 23: Persipura Jayapura (Ins) 1 Chonbuk Motors (SKo) 4; Kashima Antlers (Jap) 1 Changchun Yatai (Chn) 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chonbuk	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
Kashima	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Changchun	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Persipura	1	0	0	1	1	4	0

Group G
Feb 24: Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 0 Gamba Osaka (Jap) 0; Henan Jianye (Chn) 0 Singapore Armed Forces (Sin) 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gamba	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Henan	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
S Armed Forces	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Suwon	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

Group H
Feb 24: Sanfrecce Hiroshima (Jap) 0 Shandong Luneng (Chn) 1; Adelaide United (Aus) 1 Pohang Steelers (SKo) 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Adelaide	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Shandong	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Pohang	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Sanfrecce	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout rnd

Super League, and second-tier Qingdao Halifeng have been disqualified completely after a match-fixing investigation.

Victorious...Al Hilal

SAUDI ARABIA

Al Hilal comeback

League champions Al Hilal came from behind to beat Al Ahli 2-1 in the Saudi Crown Prince Cup. Victor Simoes opened the scoring, before Swedish forward Christian Wilhelmsson and Brazilian import Thiago Neves scored to ensure Al Hilal's third Saudi Crown Price Cup crown in a row and eighth overall.

SOUTH KOREA

Steelers slip up

Pohang Steelers' defence of their Asian Champions League crown got off to a bad start as they lost their opening game 1-0 away to Adelaide United. Mathew Leckie scored the decisive goal as the 2008 finalists got the better of the 2009 champions.

SINGAPORE

Bright start for Etoile

Etoile, the first European team to ply their trade in Singapore's top flight with a squad made up entirely from players of French origin, won their first game in the S.League, with Flavien Michelini's 86th-minute goal enough to secure a 1-0 victory against Beijing Guoan.

UAE

Ajman Cup success

Togolese striker Mohamad Abdulqader scored a hat trick as bottom of the league Ajman thrashed third-place Al Ain 4-0 to reach the Emirates Cup quarter-finals.

Remaining matchdays: March 9/10, March 23/24, March 30/31, April 13/14, April 27/28

AFC CUP

Group A
Feb 23: Ahli Sana'a (Yem) 0 Shabab Al Ordon (Jor) 1; Al Karamah (Syr) 2 Saham (Oma) 0.

AFC CUP – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Karamah	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Shabab Ordon	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Ahli Sana'a	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Saham	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group B
Feb 23: Kuwait SC (Kuw) 2 Al Hilal (Yem) 2.

AFC CUP – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Kuwait SC	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Churchill B (Ind)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group C
Feb 24: Al Jaish (Syr) 0 Kazma (Kuw) 1; Al Ahed (Leb) 0 Nasaf (Uzb) 4.

AFC CUP – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nasaf	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Kazma	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Al Jaish	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Al Ahed	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

Group D
Feb 24: Al Qadsia (Kuw) 1 Al Najmeh (Leb) 1.

AFC CUP – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Najmeh	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Al Qadsia	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Al Ittihad (Syr)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E Bengal (Ind)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group E
Feb 23: Al Wehdat (Jor) 2 Al Rayyan (Qat) 4; Al Nahda (Oma) 0 Al Riffa (Bhr) 1.

AFC CUP – GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Rayyan	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
Al Riffa	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Al Nahda	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Al Wehdat	1	0	0	1	2	4	0

Group F
Feb 23: Victory (Mdv) 0 Sriwijaya (Ins) 0; Selangor (Mly) 0 Binh Duong (Vie) 0.

AFC CUP – GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Binh Duong	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Selangor	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sriwijaya	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Victory	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

Group G
Feb 24: Persiwa Wamena (Ins) 2 VB (Mdv) 3; South China (HK) 0 Muangthong United (Tha) 0.

AFC CUP – GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
VB	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Muangthong	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
South China	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Persiwa	1	0	0	1	2	3	0

Group H
Feb 24: Thai Port (Tha) 2 Da Nang (Vie) 3; Geylang United (Sin) 1 Tai Po (HK) 1.

AFC CUP – GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Da Nang	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Geylang Utd	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Tai Po	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Thai Port	1	0	0	1	2	3	0

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout rnd

Remaining matchdays: March 16/17, March 23/24, April 6/7, April 20/21, April 27/28

AUSTRALIA

Regular season

Feb 5: Melbourne 2 North Queensland 0.
Feb 6: Adelaide 2 Brisbane 0.
Feb 7: Sydney 3 Perth 2; Gold Coast 0 Wellington 1.
Feb 8: Central Coast 3 Newcastle 0.
Feb 12: Wellington 3 Central Coast 0; Newcastle 1 Adelaide 2.
Feb 13: Perth 2 Brisbane 0; North Queensland 2 Gold Coast 1.
Feb 14: Sydney 2 Melbourne 0.

AUSTRALIA – REGULAR – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sydney	27	15	3	9	35	23	48
Melbourne	27	14	5	8	47	32	47
Gold Coast	27	13	5	9	39	35	44
Wellington	27	10	10	7	37	29	40
Perth	27	11	6	10	40	34	39
Newcastle	27	10	4	13	33	45	34
N Queensland	27	8	8	11	29	46	32
Central Coast	27	7	9	11	32	29	30
Brisbane	27	8	6	13	32	42	30
Adelaide	27	7	8	12	24	33	29

Top six qualified for championship play-offs

Championship play-offs

1st round
Feb 20: Gold Coast 0 Newcastle 0 (aet; Newcastle 6-5 on pens).
Feb 21: Wellington 1 Perth 1 (aet; Wellington 4-2 on pens).
Newcastle and Wellington qualified for minor semi-final

Major semi-final
1st leg
Feb 18: Melbourne 2 Sydney 1.
Winners qualify for Grand Final; losers qualify for preliminary final, in which they will face the winners of the minor semi-final. The winners of the preliminary final qualify for the Grand Final

IRAN

Feb 2: AbooMoslem 3 Moghavemat 0; Steel Azin 2 Foolad 3; Pas 0 Shahin 1; Esteghlal Ahvaz 1 Rah-Ahan 3; Saba 1 Zob-Ahan 1; Sepahan 5 Saipa 1; Teraktor Sazi 2 Malavan 1.
Feb 3: Persepolis 2 Esteghlal Tehran 1; Mes 3 Peykan 3.
Feb 9: Sepahan 5 Moghavemat 1.
Feb 17: Sepahan 0 Zob-Ahan 1; Esteghlal Tehran 2 Mes 0.
Feb 19: Moghavemat 1 Persepolis 2; Foolad 1 AbooMoslem 0; Malavan 1 Steel Azin 3; Peykan 3 Esteghlal Ahvaz 1; Rah-Ahan 0 Pas 0; Saipa 1 Teraktor Sazi 0; Shahin 0 Saba 1.

IRAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sepahan	27	16	7	4	56	23	55
Zob-Ahan	27	13	10	4	38	25	49
Persepolis	27	12	10	5	41	32	46
Esteghlal T	27	11	10	6	41	28	43
Steel Azin	27	11	9	7	46	41	42
Teraktor Sazi	27	9	11	7	34	31	38
Peykan	27	9	10	8	33	31	37
Saba	27	10	6	11	39	37	36
Malavan	27	9	9	9	24	33	36
Moghavemat	27	7	11	9	29	33	32
Pas	27	8	8	11	27	32	32
Saipa	27	8	8	11	31	42	32
Foolad	27	6	13	8	24	25	31
Shahin	27	6	12	9	31	31	30
Rah-Ahan	27	7	9	11	31	38	30
Mes	27	7	7	13	37	47	28
Esteghlal A	27	7	7	13	30	46	28
AbooMoslem	27	4	9	14	24	41	21

SOUTH KOREA

Feb 27: Chonbuk 3 Suwon 1; Incheon 1 Chunnam 0; Ulsan 1 Gyeongnam 0; Busan 0 Jeju 1; Daegu 1 Gwangju 2; Daejeon 2 Seoul 5; Songnam 3 Gangwon 0.

SOUTH KOREA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Seoul	1	1	0	0	5	2	3
Songnam	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Chonbuk	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Gwangju	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Incheon	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Jeju	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Ulsan	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Pohang	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Daegu	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Busan	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Chunnam	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Gyeongnam	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Suwon	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Daejeon	1	0	0	1	2	5	0
Gangwon	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Feb 13: Manu Ura (Tah) 0 Auckland (NZ) 2.
Feb 20: Waitakere United (NZ) 4 Magenta (NC) 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland	4	3	1	0	10	2	10
Waitakere	4	2	2	0	8	3	8
Magenta	4	0	2	2	4	8	2
Manu Ura	4	0	1	3	1	10	1

Group B
Feb 13: Hekari United (PNG) 4 Tafea (Van) 0.
Feb 14: Lautoka (Fij) 3 Marist (Sol) 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lautoka	4	3	0	1	9	4	9
Hekari	4	2	1	1	10	6	7
Tafea	4	2	1	1	7	8	7
Marist	4	0	0	4	2	10	0

Group winners qualify for the Final

Remaining matchdays: March 5-7, March 27/28

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

April 6/7
UEFA Champions League quarter-finals, 2nd leg
April 20
CONCACAF Champions League Final, 1st leg
April 20/21
UEFA Champions League semi-finals, 1st leg
April 20/21/22
Final round of Libertadores Cup group games
April 22
Europa League semi-finals, 1st leg
April 27
CONCACAF Champions League Final, 2nd leg
April 27/28
UEFA Champions League semi-finals, 2nd leg; final AFC Champions League group games
April 29
Europa League semi-finals, 2nd leg

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Enter online by email to worldsoccerwin@spcmdia.com or you may enter by post – write the answer and your contact number on a postcard and send it to: World Soccer TV Competition, Blue Fin Building, 9th floor, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. With postcard entries, IPC Media Ltd, publishers of World Soccer, will collect your personal information solely to process your entry. The closing date for all entries is April 19, 2010. World Soccer competitions terms and conditions: Prize details correct at time of going to press. All prizes are non-transferable and must be accepted as offered. Employees of IPC and its subsidiary companies, their families, agents or anyone connected with this promotion are not eligible to enter. Only one entry per person. Entries must not be sent through agencies or third parties; any such entries will be invalid. The promoter cannot accept responsibility for entries that are incomplete or delayed. The winners will be the specified number of winners and/or runners-up drawn at random after the closing date. Some competitions will be decided by a judging panel. Closing date: April 19, 2010. All winners will be notified within 28 days of the draw. Winners must be prepared to co-operate with any publicity arising as a result of winning the competition. A list of the winners can be obtained by sending a stamped addressed envelope specifying the name of the competition to World Soccer, Marketing Department, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. No correspondence will be entered into. The decision of the promoter in all matters is final and binding. The promoter is World Soccer Magazine, IPC Media, 9th floor, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Entry implies acceptance of these rules.

LIBERTADORES CUP

ALIANZA LIMA (Per)

GOALKEEPERS		
21	Jesus Eduardo CISNEROS	18.03.78
1	George FORSYTH	20.06.82
12	Salomon LIERMAN	25.02.84
DEFENDERS		
5	Pedro APARICIO	11.06.82
8	Juan Jose APFO	20.01.73
22	Ariston Jair PRADO	06.05.79
14	Carlos Javier SALIS	22.10.81
18	Hector SOSA (Par)	02.05.79
13	Luis Enrique TRUJILLO	27.12.80
2	Eduardo URIBE	02.08.85
4	Walter VALCHEZ	20.02.83
3	Edgar VILLAMARIN	01.04.82
MIDFIELDERS		
7	Mario CHIOLIZZA	22.02.78
25	Edgar Daniel GONZALEZ (Par)	10.04.79
16	Christopher HURTADO	27.07.80
20	Johnnier MONTANO (Col)	14.01.83
11	Henry QUINTEROS	19.10.77
10	Alexander SANCHEZ	06.06.83
6	Joel SANCHEZ	11.06.89
17	Juan Carlos TRAGODARA	16.12.85
24	Oscar Cristopher VILCHEZ	25.01.86
FORWARDS		
15	Wilmer AGUIRRE	10.05.83
22	Jose Carlos FERNANDEZ	14.06.83
19	Roberto VACLAV (Par)	01.12.85
9	Claudio VELASQUEZ (Arg)	18.07.86
COACH		
Gustavo COSTAS (Arg)		17.02.61

BANFIELD (Arg)

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Enrique BULLIGNA	12.02.82
11	Sebastian LOPEZ	14.09.85
1	Cristian LUCCHETTI	29.06.78
DEFENDERS		
4	Julio BARRAZA	04.03.80
6	Marcelo BUSTAMANTE	17.02.80
21	Jose DONCA (Par)	16.09.82
14	Mauro DOS SANTOS	07.07.80
24	Santiago LAIANO	17.01.82
2	Victor LOPEZ	16.12.78
19	Jonatan MATIANA	29.07.85
3	Jose SHAFFER	16.12.85
15	Pablo VERGARA	15.09.80
MIDFIELDERS		
5	Roberto BATTION	01.03.82
13	Mathias CARMACCIO (Uru)	02.10.87
10	Walter ERVITI	12.06.80
7	Maximiliano LAISO	17.02.88
9	Julio MARCHANT	01.11.80
23	Emanuel PIO	04.11.88
20	Marcelo QUINTEROS	23.12.76
8	James RODRIGUEZ (Col)	12.07.91
16	Federico SARDELLA	16.04.80
FORWARDS		
25	Sebastian FERNANDEZ (Uru)	22.05.85
11	Cristian GARCIA	28.03.88
18	Ruben RAMIREZ	17.10.82
22	Luis SALMERON	10.03.82
COACH		
Julio FALCIONI		20.07.56

BLOOMING (Bol)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Andres Martin TEMIO	06.07.76
22	Jorge RUTIE	26.12.82
12	Pedro VIERA	01.08.90
DEFENDERS		
25	Fabricio ORAMDAR (Bra)	16.04.82
2	Raul GONZALEZ	08.04.88
13	Andres IMPERIALE (Arg)	08.07.86
13	Dexter MALDONADO	18.03.90
3	Omar MORALES	18.01.88
4	Juan Carlos SANCHEZ	01.06.85
23	Jose VARGAS	07.11.91
21	Olivier ZABALA	31.12.82
MIDFIELDERS		
20	Sergio ALVAREZ	29.06.78
14	Jorge ANDIA	03.02.86
8	Jose Luis CHAVEZ	18.05.64
19	Michael CRISTALDO	25.06.90
16	Jesus GOMEZ	18.07.89
5	Jorge GONZALEZ	15.01.90
10	Julio HURTADO	25.12.82
24	Diego TORRICO	05.01.92
11	Luiz VIEIRA (Bra)	27.07.82
6	David VILLALBA (Par)	13.04.82
FORWARDS		
7	Damian ABERMAN (Arg)	25.03.80
18	Jose CASTILLO	09.02.83
9	Hernan SILERO (Arg)	17.04.77
17	Roger SUAREZ	02.07.77
COACH		
Victor Hugo ANDRADA (Arg)		25.12.56

BOLIVAR (Bol)

GOALKEEPERS		
15	Carlos ARIAS	18.07.80
25	Juan Fartan RIVERO	19.04.82
21	Juan ROBLEDO	03.12.78
DEFENDERS		
13	Juan BUSTILLOS	17.05.80
4	Ariel JUAREZ	26.03.80
2	Limberg MENDEZ	18.06.82
5	Renato RIVERO	29.01.80
19	Luis TORRICO	14.04.85
MIDFIELDERS		
14	Henry BAZAN	12.12.83
22	Rudy CARDOZO	14.02.80
1	Alex DA ROSA	01.06.76
10	Charles DA SILVA (Bra)	11.02.84
18	Walter FLORES	29.10.78
3	Ignacio ITURRALDE (Uru)	30.05.83
23	Mario IVANOVIC	09.11.85
16	Enrique PARADA	04.11.81
7	Abdon REYES	15.10.81
6	Leonel REYES	19.11.76
17	Boli TORRICO	18.05.84
12	Juan VALVERDE	24.06.90
FORWARDS		
8	Andre MARTINS (Por)	26.03.87
24	Jorge CESPEDES	14.07.90
11	William FERREIRA (Uru)	25.02.83
9	Aniversion GONZAGA (Bra)	29.12.83
20	Jose Gabriel PIOS	20.03.85
COACH		
Santiago ESGUERRA (Col)		13.01.64

CARACAS (Ven)

GOALKEEPERS		
22	Alain BARONA	23.10.89
1	Javier TOVO	12.10.77
25	Henry VEGA	04.07.79
DEFENDERS		
6	Jaime BUSTAMANTE (Col)	21.04.80
14	Lee BAUTISTA	29.08.83
5	Pablo CAMACHO	12.12.90
2	Alejandro CICHERO	20.04.77
4	Gabriel CICHERO	25.04.84
20	Alexander GONZALEZ	13.08.92
33	Franklin LUSENA	20.02.81
15	Edder PEREZ	03.07.83
3	Jose Manuel REY	20.05.75
19	Giovanny ROMERO	01.01.84
MIDFIELDERS		
21	Dario FIGUEROA	13.02.78
10	Jesus GOMEZ	06.08.84
7	Cesar GONZALEZ	10.10.87
18	Alejandro GUERRA	09.07.85
17	Edgar JIMENEZ	19.10.84
16	Brenner PINANGO	17.05.92
12	Guillermo RAMIREZ	13.11.89
8	Carlos SUAREZ	26.04.92
24	Zaiver VALDYES (Cpo)	16.03.86
FORWARDS		
23	Fernando ARISTEGUIETA	09.04.92
9	Rafael CASTELLIN	02.06.75
11	Rodrigo PRIETO (Mex)	08.02.83
COACH		
Noel SANNICOLITE		21.12.64

CERRO (Uru)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Damian FRASCARELLI	02.06.85
21	Diego MARTINEZ	05.08.81
12	Mathias POLERO	10.09.84
DEFENDERS		
14	Ignacio AMARILLA	10.09.86
19	Danilo ASCONEGUY	04.09.86
25	Fernando CARRENO	15.01.79
3	Walter IBANEZ	10.12.84
16	Daniel LEITES	20.02.82
2	Marcelo MANSILLA	10.03.81
4	Pablo MELO	04.07.82
24	Gaston PAGANO	08.10.84
17	Sergio SUFFO	22.02.86
MIDFIELDERS		
22	Pablo CABALLERO	21.11.87
13	Claudio DAIANO	10.02.82
8	Maximiliano LOMBARDI	11.05.87
5	Richard POLLICERO	30.05.76
7	Ricardo RIBEIRO	20.07.85
23	Andres RAVEGGA	09.01.89
6	Sebastian SUAREZ	19.02.78
15	Jorge TRUILLO	06.07.86
FORWARDS		
10	Fernando ALVES	26.12.84
18	Alvaro MOLLO	12.05.79
9	Raul Cesar MOLINA	03.07.87
11	Rodrigo MORA	29.10.87
20	Jonathan SOTO	04.10.84
COACH		
Pablo REPETTO		-

CERRO PORTENO (Par)

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Diego BARRETO	16.07.81
1	Ezequiel MEDINA (Arg)	28.12.80
25	Pablo ORTIZ	14.01.85
DEFENDERS		
15	Luis Carlos CARDOZO	10.10.88
4	Diego HERNER (Arg)	31.07.83
2	Julio Cesar IRRAZABAL	25.11.80
13	David MENDOZA	10.05.85
3	Fidel Amado PEREZ	19.10.80
5	Juan Rodrigo PIRIS	10.03.89
17	Miguel Angel TORRES (Arg)	12.08.88
MIDFIELDERS		
6	Jorge ORTIZ	03.02.81
24	Rodrigo BURGOS	21.06.89
8	Luis Enrique CAGERES	15.04.88
11	Ernesto CRISTALDO	10.03.84
10	Julio Daniel DOS SANTOS	07.05.82
23	Alberto MARTINEZ	17.12.86
16	Jorge Daniel NUNEZ	22.09.84
18	Carlos REGALDE	14.12.83
14	Javier VILLARREAL (Arg)	01.03.79
FORWARDS		
20	Ramon CARDOZO	21.04.1986
21	Sebastian EZEQUIS (Arg)	19.04.1985
22	Juan Emanuel GONZALEZ	28.01.1987
19	Roberto NANNI (Arg)	20.08.1981
7	Cesar RAMIREZ	24.03.1977
9	Pablo ZERALLOS	04.03.1986
COACH		
Pedro TROGLIO (Arg)		20.07.65

COLO COLO (Chl)

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Raul ALIVARES	14.04.80
1	Francisco PRIETO	01.07.83
25	Nery VELOSO	01.03.87
DEFENDERS		
6	Jorge CARRASCO	01.02.82
7	Paulo MAGALHAES	14.12.89
3	Luis MENA	28.08.79
13	Diego MATE	11.01.87
5	Miguel RIFFO	21.06.81
8	Sebastian TORO	02.02.90
MIDFIELDERS		
16	Charles ARANGUIZ	17.04.89
20	Rafael CARVOCA	19.07.89
4	Roberto GERLECZIA	18.10.84
13	Jose Pedro FUENZALIDA	22.02.85
14	Rodrigo MULLER	03.11.81
18	Rodrigo NGLENDEZ	03.10.77
23	Luis PAVEZ	25.06.88
21	Matias QUIROGA (Arg)	25.01.85
24	Domingo SALGENO (Par)	11.09.83
17	Arturo SANHUEZA	11.03.79
19	Andres SGUTTI (Uru)	14.12.75
10	Marcelo TORRES (Col)	01.11.84
FORWARDS		
9	Cristian BOGADO (Par)	07.01.87
22	Claudio GRAF (Arg)	31.01.76
11	Ezequiel MIRALLES (Arg)	21.07.83
1	Esteban PAREDES	01.06.80
COACH		
Hugo TOCALLI (Arg)		21.01.48

SQUADS 2010

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CORINTHIANS (Bra)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	FELIPE	22.02.84
22	JULIO CESAR	27.10.84
12	RAFAEL SANTOS	14.02.89
DEFENDERS		
2	ALESSANDRO	10.01.79
3	CHICAO	03.06.81
16	DIDIO	06.02.92
14	LEANDRO CASTAN	05.11.86
13	PAULO ANDRE	20.06.83
6	ROBERTO CARLOS	10.04.73
4	WILLIAM	24.06.76
MIDFIELDERS		
10	DANILO	11.06.79
20	Matias DEFEDERICIS (Arg)	23.08.89
25	EDU	15.05.78
7	ELIAS	16.05.85
18	JUCILEI	06.04.88
15	MARCELO MATTOS	10.02.64
24	MIKACIR	14.02.86
21	MORAIS	17.01.84
5	RALF	09.06.84
8	TCHESKI	11.04.76
FORWARDS		
17	DENTINHO	19.01.89
11	IARLEY	29.03.74
23	JORGE HENRIQUE	23.04.87
9	RONALDO	22.09.76
19	SOUZA	04.03.82
COACH		
Mano MENEZES		11.06.62

CRUZEIRO (Bra)

GOALKEPPERS		
1	FABIO	20.09.80
24	FLAVIO	05.03.85
12	RAFAEL	23.06.89
DEFENDERS		
22	CACAPA	29.05.76
16	FERNANDINHO	16.04.81
3	GIL	12.06.87
2	JONATHAN	27.02.85
4	LEONARDO SILVA	22.06.79
12	MARCOS	xx
14	THIAGO HELENO	17.09.80
MIDFIELDERS		
6	DIEGO RENAN	20.01.90
11	ELICARLOS	08.06.85
15	FABINHO	18.01.80
5	FABRICIO	05.07.82
8	HENRIQUE	16.05.85
7	MARQUINHOS PARANA	20.07.77
FORWARDS		
23	ANDERSON LESSA	26.07.1989
20	BERNARDO	20.05.1990
21	ELIANDRO	23.04.1990
10	GILBERTO	25.04.1976
19	Johny GUERRON (Ecu)	26.04.1985
25	ULEBER	17.08.1983
18	PEDRO KEN	20.03.1987
11	THIAGO RIBEIRO	24.02.1986
9	WELLINGTON PAULISTA	22.04.1983
COACH		
Adilson BATISTA		16.03.68

DEPORTIVO CUENCA (Ecu)

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Israel ALVAREZ	24.02.84
22	Esteban DREER (Arg)	11.11.81
1	Carlos MORAN	29.08.76
DEFENDERS		
3	Arlio ARIAS	06.05.79
17	Jaime CHILA	04.04.82
21	William ESPAÑA	11.02.81
19	Juan GUERRON	21.10.83
2	Adrian JANIERO (Arg)	29.07.66
15	John MARMOLEJO	12.06.91
5	Marco QUIÑONEZ	28.09.77
MIDFIELDERS		
14	Pablo ARGAMILO	09.03.79
10	Jesse BIVIAN	22.05.86
20	Christian CORDERO	20.10.87
16	Michael CHIARA	13.08.81
24	Fernando FIGUEROA	07.03.87
4	Juan GARCIA	17.10.77
18	Jose IBARRA	18.03.84
8	Maurisio MORTADO	22.10.85
9	Gabriel MENDEZ (Arg)	08.05.88
6	Giancarlo RAMOS	02.09.78
25	Jose Alberto VALDIVIEZO	22.02.89
FORWARDS		
13	Darwin CAICEDO	25.05.83
11	Luis Miguel ESCALADA (Arg)	27.02.86
7	Jorge CADAVES	21.09.86
23	Jefferson NAVERA	01.11.88
COACH		
Paul VELEZ		-

DEPORTIVO ITALIA (Ven)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Ron Carlo FERNANDEZ (Bol)	24.01.71
12	Alan LIEBESKIND	07.01.85
22	Giro ZAMORA	13.07.90
DEFENDERS		
15	Ricardo ANDRICUTTI	18.06.87
3	Daniel DIEZ	20.07.76
19	Rafael LOBO	15.05.81
4	Javier LOPEZ (Arg)	19.03.80
6	Marcelo MAIDANA (Arg)	07.01.79
2	David MCINTOSH	17.02.73
21	Heriberto RUGGOS	17.10.84
24	Andres SANCHEZ	12.12.87
MIDFIELDERS		
20	Oneour DIAZ	26.02.90
7	Gianfranco DI IULIO	07.01.85
8	Alain GIROLLETI	08.06.79
11	Evelio HERNANDEZ	18.06.84
14	Leopoldo JIMENEZ	22.05.76
5	Bladimir MORALES	09.04.83
13	Yhonny SALCEDO	09.05.89
10	Tersiel TABAREZ	13.08.81
18	Gabriel URDANETA	07.01.76
FORWARDS		
9	Richard BLANCO	21.01.87
25	Amir DUCLAVS (Sol)	24.12.79
23	Cristian CASSERES	29.06.77
17	Felix CASSERES	13.06.87
18	Emerson PAINGUTTI (Arg)	13.02.76
COACH		
Eduardo SARAGO		-

DEPORTIVO QUITO (Ecu)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Patricio GARCIA	25.06.80
12	Oswaldo GUARDA	08.09.70
22	Diego Armando SALAS	21.10.87
DEFENDERS		
14	Jose Ramon AGUIRRE	05.01.83
2	Geovanny CAICEDO	20.03.81
20	Luis Armando CHECA	21.12.83
25	Angel ESCOBAR	20.03.81
6	Pedro ESTERILLA	20.10.84
23	Ivan Fabiolo MORTADO	16.06.74
3	Isaac MINA	17.10.80
19	Jesus David SOLIS	11.05.88
21	Luis Alexis TENORIO	23.05.76
MIDFIELDERS		
7	Michael ARROYO	23.04.87
4	Roberto CASTRO	15.01.89
17	Mauricio DONOSO	30.04.76
8	Tibaw INUMA	26.07.82
18	William ORTIZ	17.03.91
16	Juan Carlos PAREDES	08.01.87
10	Luis Fernando SARITAMA	20.10.82
5	Edwin TENORIO	16.06.76
15	Jose VISCAINO	05.03.83
FORWARDS		
9	Ivan BURGHELLO (Arg)	21.01.82
11	Marcos PORCHERI (Arg)	25.01.86
22	Franco NIELL	22.05.85
24	Daniel Alejandro SOLANO	14.02.89
COACH		
Ruben Dario INSUA (Arg)		17.04.61

EMELEC (Ecu)

GOALKEEPER		
12	Jose David ARROYO	17.05.89
1	Marcelo Ramon BUZIGNA	19.04.72
22	Javier Hernan KUMOVITZ	18.03.77
DEFENDER		
23	Gabriel Eduardo ACHILLIER	24.03.85
19	Julio Marcelo FLEITAS	01.09.73
21	Deison Adolfo MENDEZ	27.10.90
2	Mariano Florencio MINA	03.03.79
3	Eduardo Javier MORANTE	01.06.87
4	Luis Alberto ZAMBRANO	16.06.82
MIDFIELDERS		
9	Silvano ESTACIO	16.12.81
25	Fernando Vicente GAVIOR	08.10.91
24	Fernando GIMENEZ (Par)	10.07.84
13	Angel Israel MENA	21.01.89
20	Pablo Javier PEREZ (Arg)	10.06.85
18	Jefferson David PINTO	27.03.90
6	Carlos Andres QUIÑONEZ	16.08.80
5	Jose Luis QUIÑONEZ	29.05.84
15	Pedro Angel QUIÑONEZ	04.03.86
7	Miguel David QUIROZ	08.09.82
8	Polo Raul VILA	04.02.87
FORWARDS		
11	Jaime Javier AYOVI	21.02.89
16	Santiago BIGLIERI (Arg)	11.02.86
10	Hernan PERRONE (Arg)	28.05.86
10	Jose Robin ROJAS	14.06.89
14	Edwar Humberto VALENCIA	04.11.89
COACH		
Jorge SAMPAOLI (Arg)		-

ESTUDIANTES (Arg)

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Damian ALDAO	09.12.79
21	Agustin ORION	26.06.81
1	Cesar TABARRA	23.01.84
DEFENDERS		
14	Marcos ANGELERI	07.04.83
3	Christian GELLAV	05.09.81
2	Leandro DESABATO	24.01.79
17	Federico FERNANDEZ	21.02.89
4	Raul IBERRIA	25.12.68
16	German PEZ	02.11.81
12	Clemente RODRIGUEZ	31.07.81
6	Marcos RIOJA	20.03.90
MIDFIELDERS		
23	Leandro BENITEZ	05.04.81
22	Rodrigo BRANA	07.03.79
10	Marcelo CARRUSCA	01.09.83
13	Michael HIRYUS (USA)	02.04.91
8	Enzo PEREZ	22.02.86
5	Matias SANCHEZ	10.04.81
7	Jose SOSA	19.06.85
24	Boris STEFANATTO	03.04.85
11	Juan Sebastian VERON	09.03.76
FORWARDS		
9	Mauro BOSELLI	22.05.85
19	Gaston FERNANDEZ	12.10.83
20	Leandro GONZALEZ	14.10.85
15	Jeronimo HEIMANN	03.06.08
18	Maximiliano HUNEZ	17.06.86
COACH		
Alejandro SABELLA		05.11.54

FLAMENGO (Bra)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	BRUNO	23.12.84
12	Marcelo LOMBA	18.12.86
24	Paulo VICTOR	12.01.87
DEFENDERS		
3	ALVARO	01.11.77
4	Ronaldo ANGELIM	29.11.75
14	DAVID	21.05.87
19	EVERTON SILVA	04.08.80
20	FABRICIO	20.02.90
6	IAN	06.02.87
2	LEO MOURA	23.10.78
21	PODRIGO ABUM	25.11.83
22	WELINTON	10.04.89
MIDFIELDERS		
17	FERNANDO	12.05.86
15	KLEBERSON	19.06.79
13	LENON	07.05.90
13	Claudio MALDONADO (Chi)	03.01.80
25	MICHAEL	16.02.83
7	Dejan PETROVIC (Ser)	19.09.72
5	TOGO	13.04.86
22	Vinicius PACHECO	27.09.85
8	WILLIANS	29.01.86
FORWARDS		
10	ADRIANO	17.02.82
11	BRUNO MEZENGA	08.08.88
16	Gonzalo FIERRO (CHI)	21.03.83
9	WAGNER LOVE	11.06.84
COACH		
ANDRADE		21.04.57

LIBERTADORES CUP

INDEPENDIENTE MEDELLIN (Col)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Aldo BUDAHILLA (Par)	20.04.76
22	Bairon GARCIA	12.06.85
12	Brayan LOPEZ	25.07.87
DEFENDERS		
4	Ricardo CALLE	18.02.80
2	Roberto CARLOS COFFES	20.06.77
3	Anselmo DE ALMEIDA (Bra)	18.08.80
25	Eulme JIMENEZ	26.04.89
16	Juan MORIEL	07.05.89
20	Lewis OCHOA	04.08.84
24	Herman PERTUZ	31.02.89
6	Juan David VALENCIA	15.01.85
MIDFIELDERS		
23	Javier CALLE	29.04.91
18	Giovanny LOPEZ	15.04.89
15	Juan LOPEZ	06.04.90
8	Nelson BARAHONA (Pue)	22.11.87
14	Yoke MOSQUERA	15.04.89
5	Juan ORTIZ	29.08.87
21	Javier RESTREPO	22.08.77
19	Alejandro VASCO	05.03.82
FORWARDS		
7	Luis Carlos ARIAS	13.01.85
17	Cesar Bruno CHARK	28.06.79
9	Mario Edison GIMENEZ (Par)	05.04.81
10	Dresser MORENO	01.11.79
13	Felipe PARDO	12.06.90
11	Oscar VALDYES	05.01.84
COACH		
Leonel ALVAREZ		30.07.65

INTERNACIONAL (Bra)

GOALKEEPER		
25	Roberto ABBONDANZIERI (Arg)	19.08.72
1	LAURO	09.03.80
24	MORIEL	14.02.87
DEFENDERS		
2	BOLIVAR	16.03.80
12	BRUNO SILVA (Uru)	29.03.80
13	DANILO SILVA	24.11.86
4	FABIANO ELLER	19.11.77
3	INDIO	14.02.75
19	JUAN	18.06.91
6	KLEBER	01.04.80
15	NEI	06.12.85
14	Gonzalo SOROND0 (Uru)	09.10.79
MIDFIELDERS		
17	ANDRECINHO	30.07.83
10	Andres D'ALESSANDRO (Arg)	15.04.81
16	EDU	10.01.79
11	GIULIANO	31.05.90
20	GLAYSON	20.06.79
5	Pablo GUIÑAZU (Arg)	26.08.78
21	Wilson MATHIAS	14.09.83
8	SANDRO	15.03.80
FORWARDS		
9	ALESSANDRO	04.02.81
22	Leandro DAMIAO	22.07.89
23	KLEBER PEREIRA	12.03.75
7	TAISON	17.01.88
16	WALTER	22.07.89
COACH		
Jorge FOSSATI (Uru)		22.11.52

JUAN AURICH (Per)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Diego MORALES (Arg)	15.04.83
21	Paul Aaron PANTOJA	04.11.79
12	Jorge Edie RIVERA	28.10.76
DEFENDERS		
18	Jesus Martin ALVAREZ	26.08.81
3	Jorge Martin ARAUJO	30.11.79
15	Victor Julio BACTA	03.01.86
14	Gary Ivanssen CORREA	23.05.90
19	Roberto Carlos GUIZASOLA	31.08.84
5	Johnny Javier LALIPU	25.03.82
13	Willy Alexander RIVAS	04.06.85
2	Jerssom VASQUEZ	05.03.86
MIDFIELDERS		
4	Miguel Angel CEVASCO	27.04.86
10	Ricardo CICILIANO (Col)	23.09.76
6	Gianfranco ESPEJO	04.03.88
7	Jose Luis GUEVARA	16.10.74
24	Juan Carlos LA ROSA	03.07.80
17	Reinrond MANCO	23.08.90
25	Franco Giovanni MENDOZA	23.01.77
16	Oscar Alberto SANCHEZ	21.05.73
FORWARDS		
8	Pedro Luis ASCOY	10.08.1980
20	Manuel Francisco BARRETO	12.08.1982
22	William CARVOQUE	19.05.1980
23	Fernando Rafael GARCIA	21.07.1987
9	Luis Carlos TEJADA (Par)	28.03.1982
11	Harlen Yuraxi ZUNIGA	27.08.1976
COACH		
Luis Fernando SUAREZ (Col)		23.12.58

LANUS (Arg)

GOALKEEPERS		
13	Esteban ANDRADA	26.01.91
15	Mauricio CARANTA	31.07.78
1	Agustin MARCHESIN	16.03.88
DEFENDERS		
25	Carlos ARCE	04.02.85
23	Rodrigo ERRAMUSPE	03.05.90
20	Emir FACCIOLI	05.08.89
4	Hernan Gustavo GRANA	18.04.85
17	Santiago HOYOS	03.06.82
6	Gabriel VIERA (Bra)	04.08.91
24	Maximiliano LUGO	04.12.89
2	Carlos Gustavo QUINTANA	11.02.80
3	Maximiliano VELAZQUEZ	12.09.80
MIDFIELDERS		
21	Marcos AGUIRRE	28.03.84
10	Sebastian BLANCO	15.03.80
22	Nelson CARRASCO	14.02.89
5	Matias FRITZLER	23.06.86
16	Diego GONZALEZ	09.02.86
12	Eduardo LEDESMA (Par)	01.07.85
8	Agustin PELLETIERI	17.05.82
18	Guido PIZARRO	26.02.90
FORWARDS		
11	Gonzalo CASTELLEJOS	06.03.86
18	Leandro DIAZ	06.06.92
7	Diego LAGOS	05.02.86
9	Cristian MENENDEZ	02.04.88
14	Santiago SALCEDO (Par)	06.09.91
COACH		
Luis ZUBELDIA		13.01.31

LIBERTAD (Par)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Jorge BAVA (Uru)	02.06.81
25	Bernardo MEDINA	14.01.88
12	Tobias VARGAS	21.06.89
DEFENDERS		
2	Ismael BENEGAS	01.06.87
19	Jorge Luis CAPALLERO	10.03.90
4	Gustavo MENCIA	05.07.88
3	Adalberto ROMAN	11.04.87
15	Miguel SANUDIO	24.06.86
14	Pedro SAPADIA	05.07.75
33	Francisco SUNI	18.10.90
MIDFIELDERS		
20	Rodrigo ALDEPHUZ	12.06.1993
16	Sergio ADORNO	21.09.1979
5	Victor ANIA	01.01.1980
18	Victor CASERES	25.03.1985
11	Gustavo CRISTALDO	31.05.1989
17	Jorge MORIERA	01.02.1990
8	Wilson PITTONI	14.08.1985
6	Omar PROSO (Uru)	28.02.1980
7	Edgar RIOBLOS	22.11.1977
FORWARDS		
9	Roberto GAMARRA	11.05.81
22	Rodolfo GAMARRA	10.12.88
22	Javier GONZALEZ	24.06.79
10	William MONDIETA	09.01.89
24	Jose NUNEZ	12.08.88
21	Pablo VELAZQUEZ	12.03.87
COACH		
Javier TORRENTE (Arg)		–

MONTERREY (Mex)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Jonathan OROZCO	12.05.86
26	Omar ORTIZ	13.03.76
DEFENDERS		
15	Jose Maria BASANTA (Arg)	03.04.84
4	Diego CERVANTES	30.08.84
5	Unilo DAVINO	21.03.76
3	Eduardo GUEVARA	17.09.89
2	Severo MEZA	09.07.86
21	Sergio PEREZ	13.10.86
24	Jose Oscar POZO	22.06.89
MIDFIELDERS		
12	Jesus ARELLANO	08.05.73
28	Walter AYOVI (Ecu)	11.04.79
18	Neri CARDOZO (Arg)	06.03.86
6	Gerardo GALINDO	22.05.70
10	Osvaldo MARTINEZ (Par)	08.04.86
7	Juan Carlos MEDINA	22.08.83
19	Miguel MORALES	03.05.85
22	William PAREDES	09.09.85
8	Luis Ernesto PEREZ	12.01.81
16	Luis RODRIGUEZ	21.01.91
FORWARDS		
13	Dario CARRENO	13.01.84
11	Aldo DE NIGRIS	22.07.83
14	Brayan MARTINEZ	22.01.90
9	Sergio SANTANA	10.06.81
23	Val BAIANO (Bra)	07.04.81
17	Jesus Eduardo ZAVALA	21.07.87
COACH		
Victor Manuel VUCETICH		25.06.55

MORELIA (Mex)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Miguel Angel FRAGA	03.09.87
23	Moises MUNOZ	01.02.80
19	Carlos Felipe RODRIGUEZ	03.04.89
DEFENDERS		
14	Marvin CABRERA	01.05.80
3	Jaime GURAM	02.12.81
2	Enrique PEREZ	13.10.86
5	Mauricio ROMERO (Arg)	13.01.82
15	Christian SANCHEZ	04.04.89
MIDFIELDERS		
16	Adrian ALDRETE	14.06.88
20	Pedro BELTRAN	29.06.88
11	Hugo BROSQUET (Chi)	02.09.82
8	Jorge Luis CASTELLON	20.02.80
17	Jorge HERNANDEZ	03.09.85
21	Mario Antonio MORENO	02.04.86
10	Gabriel PEREYRA (Arg)	23.02.78
6	Ismael PINEDA	06.01.89
22	Aldo RAMIREZ (Col)	10.04.81
13	Fernando SALAZAR	13.06.79
4	Fernando SILVA	23.03.89
FORWARDS		
25	Jared BORGETTI	14.04.70
7	Elias HERNANDEZ	29.04.88
18	Luis Gabriel REY (Col)	20.02.88
12	Oscar ROJAS (CR)	27.04.79
9	Miguel SABAH	14.11.79
24	Miguel SANSORES	20.04.91
COACH		
Tomas BOY		20.06.52

NACIONAL (Par)

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Oscar AGUERO	15.06.82
1	Ever Arnes CABALLERO	27.04.82
22	German CAFFA (Arg)	14.07.80
DEFENDERS		
2	Arturo ADORNO	14.09.82
4	Celso Pablo GONZALEZ	18.06.80
24	Ricardo MAZACOTTE (Arg)	09.01.85
13	Hermino MIRANDA	07.05.85
15	Raul PIRIS	09.12.89
21	Gilberto VELAZQUEZ	11.03.83
MIDFIELDERS		
9	Orlando BORDON	07.06.86
19	Ramon CASERES	27.07.79
16	Blas IRALA	30.11.83
14	Marcos MELGAREJO	04.11.87
6	Marcos MIERS	24.03.90
8	Gustavo Eliseo MORINIGO	23.01.77
20	Aldo Ruben PANIAGUA	12.07.89
17	Carlos RUIZ PERALTA	17.07.84
10	Fabio Ramon SANDOS	14.06.89
5	Marcos RIVEROS	28.05.87
7	Alfredo RIOS	30.12.87
FORWARDS		
23	Victor AQUINO	26.11.85
18	Guillermo BELTRAN	25.06.84
11	Ariel BOGADO	24.12.83
7	Fabian CABALLERO (Arg)	31.01.78
12	Sergio GIMEZ	18.12.90
COACH		
Ever ALMEIDA		01.07.48

SQUADS 2010

SQUADS 2010

NACIONAL (Uru)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Leonardo GURIAN	21.01.84
25	Rodrigo MUNOZ	22.01.82
12	Nicolas PEREZ	05.02.90
DEFENDERS		
7	Eduardo ARANDA (Par)	20.01.85
19	Sebastian COATES	07.10.90
3	Martin GAILAN	02.02.89
18	Gonzalo GODOY	17.01.86
6	Ernesto GONI	13.01.85
2	Alejandro LEMBO	15.02.78
4	Christian NUNEZ	24.06.82
MIDFIELDERS		
17	Maximiliano CALZADA	21.04.90
8	Matias CARBERA	16.05.86
13	Raul FERRO	13.01.83
15	Alvaro GONZALEZ	29.10.84
5	Gianni LUGUDI	22.02.75
10	Angel MORALES (Arg)	14.06.75
21	Oscar Javier MORALES	29.03.79
22	Mauricio PEREYRA	15.03.90
23	Facundo PIRIZ	27.03.90
14	Mario REQUEJIFO	14.06.78
16	Gustavo VARELA	14.05.78
FORWARDS		
9	Sebastian BALSAS	05.03.86
11	Sergio BLANCO	25.11.81
20	Santiago GARCIA	14.09.90
24	Diego VERA	09.01.85
COACH		
Eduardo ACEVEDO		25.06.50

ONCE CALDAS (Col)

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Hector LANDAZURI	20.06.83
1	Luis MARTINEZ	04.06.65
25	John Jairo RINCON	06.11.85
DEFENDERS		
5	Diego AMAYA	18.11.85
3	Alexis HERNANDEZ	01.02.83
2	Felix MICOLTA	20.11.89
16	Luis Alberto NUNEZ	18.12.83
19	Carlos Andres RAMIREZ	01.05.88
22	Juan RAMOS	25.01.86
13	Jose Ivan VELEZ	16.06.84
4	Oswaldo VIZCARRONO (Ven)	31.05.84
MIDFIELDERS		
6	Diego Armando ARIAS	15.06.85
24	Jose Guillermo BATAN	01.11.83
23	Jaime CASTRILLON	05.04.83
18	Sebastian HERNANDEZ	02.10.86
8	Yeisinger JIMENEZ	12.01.91
21	Dayron PEREZ	24.12.77
7	Sebastian RAMIREZ	12.10.83
0	Henry RIBAS	27.07.87
14	John Jairo VALENCIA	27.03.82
FORWARDS		
15	Fernando CARDENAS	30.04.88
17	Dayro MORENO	16.09.85
10	Danny SANTANA	24.04.80
11	Sebastian TAGLIAFUE (Arg)	22.02.85
20	Fernando URIBE	01.01.80
COACH		
Juan Carlos OSORIO		08.06.62

RACING (Uru)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Jorge Walter GUINTHERAS	21.09.71
12	Martin GONGORA	27.06.80
25	Roman Mario PAPOSH	02.08.65
DEFENDERS		
23	Mathias ABEJRO	09.04.90
4	Gonzalo AGUILAR	02.06.81
2	Rodrigo Nicolas BRASESCO	23.01.86
18	Hector HERNANDEZ	13.05.85
17	Jose Ignacio PALLAS	05.01.83
13	Danny TEJERA	14.04.86
3	Gonzalo Miguel VICENTE	22.12.79
MIDFIELDERS		
24	Ernesto Sanon BIDOOK	14.01.87
22	Dario Antonio FLORES	06.02.84
15	Ramon LAPROSA	13.12.71
20	Gaston MACHADO	19.01.86
10	Matias MIRABAIE	06.03.89
5	Santiago Humberto OSTOLAZA	30.09.87
6	Alejandro Gleber REYES	01.01.84
8	Diego SCOTTI	14.01.77
16	Hector VEGA	12.06.84
FORWARDS		
14	Juan Pierre BARRIENTOS	16.09.90
18	Martin CAUTERUCCIO	14.04.81
7	Jorge Luis CAZULO	14.02.82
9	Roman Marcelo CIRELLO	04.04.77
11	Liber Daniel QUINDINEZ	11.02.65
21	Nestor Fabian SILVA	17.01.82
COACH		
Juan VERZEBI		–

SAO PAULO (Bra)

GOALKEEPERS		
22	BOSCO	14.11.74
24	DENIS	14.04.87
1	ROGERIO CENI	14.01.73
DEFENDERS		
3	ALEX SILVA	10.03.85
4	ANDRE LUIS	31.07.79
22	CICINHO	24.06.80
2	JUNIOR CESAR	09.04.82
5	MIRANDA	07.09.84
14	RENATO SILVA	26.06.83
13	XANDAO	23.02.88
MIDFIELDERS		
15	CARLINHOS PARAIBA	04.03.83
6	CLEBER SANTANA	27.06.81
10	HERNANES	29.05.85
7	JEAN	24.06.86
8	JORGE WAGNER	17.11.78
17	LEO LIMA	14.01.82
11	MARCELINHO	17.05.75
16	MORLOS	07.06.80
20	RICHARLYSON	27.12.82
19	RODRIGO SOUTO	09.06.83
21	SERGIO HOSTA	16.11.89
FORWARDS		
25	DAGOBERT	22.03.83
12	FERNANDINHO	25.11.85
19	HENRIQUE	27.05.91
9	WASHINGTON	01.04.75
COACH		
RICARDO GOMES		13.12.64

UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA (Chl)

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Fabian CERDA	07.02.89
1	Paulo GARCES	02.08.84
23	Cristopher TOSELLI	15.06.85
DEFENDERS		
3	Enzo ANDIA	16.06.92
2	Ismael FUENTES	04.08.81
5	David HERRIQUEZ	12.03.77
16	Hans MARTINEZ	04.01.87
14	Leonel MENA	23.09.82
29	Diego ROSENDE	11.02.86
4	Eduardo VILLAGRA	11.06.90
MIDFIELDERS		
13	Gerardo BAGAES	26.07.89
25	Alfonso CARRENO	29.10.60
15	Damian DIAZ (Arg)	01.05.86
21	Felipe GUTIERREZ	08.10.90
27	Fernando MENESES	27.09.85
10	Mirosan MIROSEVIC	20.06.80
8	Jorge SOMCHO	14.06.77
6	Francisco SILVA	11.02.86
11	Rodrigo TOLOZA	03.05.84
7	Rodrigo VALENZUELA	27.11.75
FORWARDS		
9	Rodrigo MANRAPA (Arg)	24.12.79
17	Juan Jose MORALES (Arg)	23.03.82
18	Matias RUBIO	06.08.88
19	Francisco PIZARRO	10.05.89
24	Pablo VRANDICAN (Arg)	11.12.83
COACH		
Marco Antonio FIGUEROA		21.02.62

UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE (Chl)

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Christopher CASARETTO	19.07.87
12	Esteban CONDE (Uru)	04.03.83
1	Miguel PINTO	04.07.83
2	Carlos SALAS	28.11.84
DEFENDERS		
24	Juan ARAVENA	07.12.80
6	Mauricio ARIAS	27.10.84
22	Jose CONTRERAS	23.02.87
21	Marcelo DIAZ	20.12.86
20	Juan GONZALEZ	06.10.75
19	Rafael QUAPIN	26.06.78
17	Jose Manuel ROJAS	23.06.83
4	Mauricio VICTORINO (Uru)	11.10.82
MIDFIELDERS		
3	Marco ESTRADA	28.05.83
23	Mauro FERNANDEZ (Uru)	11.10.85
16	Manuel ITURRA	23.06.84
10	Walter MONTILLO (Arg)	14.04.84
11	Nelson PINTO	01.02.81
18	Edson PUCH	08.04.86
5	Matias RODRIGUEZ (Arg)	14.04.86
14	Felipe SEYMOUR	23.07.87
15	Jose Luis SILVA	07.01.91
FORWARDS		
9	Juan Manuel OLIVERA (Uru)	14.08.81
7	Diego RIVAROLA (Arg)	14.07.76
17	Eduardo VARGAS	20.11.89
8	Gabriel VARGAS (Chl)	08.12.83
COACH		
Gerardo PELUSSO (Uru)		25.02.54

UNIVERSITARIO (Per)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Raul FERNANDEZ	06.10.85
12	Luis GUENTOP	02.10.85
25	Renzo LIBRANO	01.05.90
DEFENDERS		
17	Giancarlo CARMONA	12.10.85
14	Nestor DUARTE	08.04.90
2	John GALLIQUIO	01.12.76
3	Carlos GALVAN (Arg)	20.10.73
13	Renzo REVOREDO	11.05.86
4	Adrian ZELA	20.03.89
MIDFIELDERS		
21	Rodolfo ESPINOZA (Mex)	14.06.81
5	Antonio GONZALES	16.05.66
20	Luis HERNANDEZ	15.02.81
22	Jesus NARANJA	25.12.84
8	Luis RAMIREZ	10.11.84
10	Carlos ROSALINO	27.01.91
16	Yeraldo SALDANA	07.07.87
7	Miguel TORRES	17.01.82
6	Rainer TORRES	12.01.88
15	Jorge VASQUEZ	08.10.84
FORWARDS		
23	Piero ALVA	14.02.79
9	Victor Paiz NUNEZ (Uru)	22.06.80
24	Juan BARROS (Col)	24.06.86
11	Gianfranco LABARTHE	20.08.84
19	Carlos OROZCO	04.04.80
18	Raul PRIDIAZ	25.07.90
COACH		
Juan REYNOSO		20.12.69

VELEZ SARSFIELD (Arg)

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Marcelo BARNOVERO	18.02.84
12	Emanuel CAGNEE	07.01.84
25	German MONTOYA	23.01.83
DEFENDERS		
5	Fabian CUBERO	21.12.78
4	Gastre DIAZ	13.03.88
6	Sebastian DOMINGUEZ	29.07.80
13	Pablo LIMA (Uru)	26.03.81
19	Nicolas OTAMENDI	12.02.88
3	Emiliano PAPA	19.04.87
15	Fernando TOBIO	18.10.89
2	Marco TORSIGLIERI	12.01.88
MIDFIELDERS		
24	Alejandro CABRAL	11.09.87
8	Nicolas CABRERA	05.06.84
14	Leandro CORONEL	10.02.86
10	Maximiliano HERALEZ	27.02.87
17	Franco MAZZOTTI	08.02.85
18	Leandro SOMMZA	26.01.91
22	Leandro VELAZQUEZ	10.05.89
16	Victor ZAPATA	20.01.79
FORWARDS		
20	Leandro CAROSO	14.07.91
23	Jonathan CRISTALDO	05.03.89
9	Rodrigo LOPEZ (Uru)	21.01.76
7	Ivan MARTINEZ	25.10.85
33	Santiago SILVA (Uru)	09.12.80
11	Rolando ZAPATE	06.06.78
COACH		
Ricardo GARECA		10.02.56

Famous Last Words

Who said what and why

"He's the enemy of the Argentine team"

Argentina coach Diego Maradona (below) attacks Real Madrid director of sport Jorge Valdano (right) for pushing Gabriel Heinze out of the Bernabeu door and not allowing Fernando Gago to go on loan to Manchester City in January

Under fire...Valdano has not endeared himself to Maradona (left)

"A chronic groin condition? It's pure invention. Lies"

Kaka denies reports that he has a career-threatening injury

"I've had a few offers to coach teams, but I'll never do it. For the moment, I'm not missing football"

Paolo Maldini insists he won't follow in the footsteps of his father, Cesare Maldini

"I'd rather die than lead their national team. If Israel was the last team in the world, I'd rather quit the profession"

Egypt boss Hassan Shehata dismisses speculation that he might lead Israel

Adamant...Shehata

"In my field, that of pure goalscorer, there isn't much competition apart from Anelka and Gignac. Why should I give up hope?"

After being called up to replace the injured Louis Saha in the France squad to face Spain in a friendly, Panathinaikos' in-form striker Djibril Cisse targets a World Cup 2010 recall

Positive thinking...Cisse

"I cannot imagine Dunga picking him for the World Cup. He doesn't see him as a starter and does not want to continually be under pressure to bring him off the bench"

Brazil legend Tostao makes sense explaining why *Selecao* coach Dunga continues to ignore the Ronaldinho revival

"I'm not surprised that few Germans are buying tickets for the World Cup. I was never a big supporter of holding the tournament in South Africa. They cannot guarantee 100 per cent security"

Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness insists FIFA blundered in their choice of host

"The Captain in his Most Difficult Hour"

Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* sums up the relegation of Real Madrid icon Raul to the first-team fringes

"I'm for the uncertainty in the game. The arrival of a video referee would dehumanise football"

Ex-France, Juventus and Parma defender Lilian Thuram joins Platini and Blatter in the anti-technology camp

"Gag number 1,264,721"

Corriere della Sera tires of the touchline theatrics of Internazionale coach Jose Mourinho who made a handcuff gesture at referee Paolo Tagliavento after the game with Sampdoria

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